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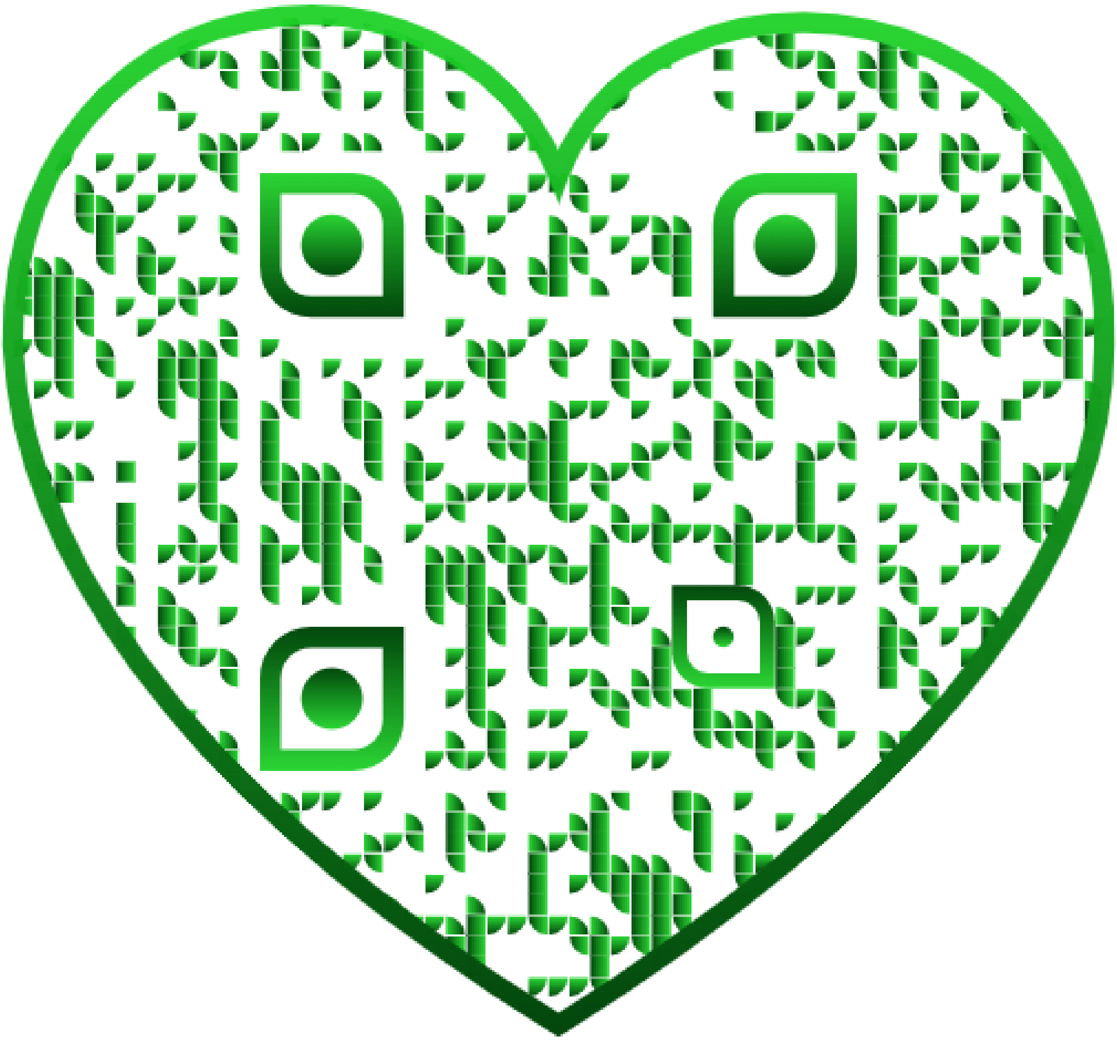

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Welcome to July

July is summer proper in the garden. It's the time of blooms and burgeoning fruit, harvests and lush growth, and although there's plenty to do, it's easy. We're just keeping things ticking over, feeding and deadheading to keep those flowers and fruits coming.

I love deadheading. It is the most satisfying job, picking over a hanging basket or nipping through a rose bush with secateurs. It quickly becomes clear why we're doing it, when we see even more blooms. A plant flowers primarily to reproduce and set seed, so if we snip off the spent flowers and don't let it go to seed, it will try again, diverting its energy from seed production to flowering.

Getting your head round things like this is one of the reasons I love gardening: mastering an understanding of how plants tick and then working with nature to get the best results, for our garden and, crucially, pollinators such as butterflies and bees! So, if we want a seamless display we've got to keep at it.

There are also other ways to ensure our gardens remain a riot of blooms, and Frances has excellent tips on doing just that on p34. Otherwise, this month should be spent outside enjoying our gardens and being thankful that all our hard work has paid off.

On the subject of thanks, I owe a big thank you to Kevin for his kind words last month in handing over the reins of the magazine to me. I've worked with *Gardeners' World* for more than 20 years, first on the TV programme and then across the magazine and website, so it's an honour (if a slightly nerve-racking one) to shift my gaze from reviewing tools to editing the pages of the magazine I have such a huge affection for. I don't think it will be as simple or easy to master as deadheading, but I've no doubt I'm going to love it.

Kay

Kay Maguire, Editor

Pack a picnic and head to **In Conversation at Kew Gardens**, 4-7 Sep, for an exciting series of live events. Speakers include Richard Osman, Mary Beard and John Craven, with **Adam Frost** and **Frances Tophill** heading up our BBC Gardeners' World Live day (6 Sep). To book and get **15% off tickets**, go to ***inconversationlive.co.uk***

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Here at *GW*, our goal is simple: to provide expert, trusted advice and inspiration to gardeners – whenever and wherever they need us. Through all of this, we're rooted in a set of core values that are at the heart of all we do:

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✔ **Every space counts** We understand that gardens come in all shapes and sizes, from indoor windowsills and balconies to country plots and community spaces. Our content is inclusive, and we recognise that everyone can garden regardless of their ability, space, available time or budget.

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Thank you for being part of our *GW* family – it means a lot to have you on board. And however you enjoy *GW*, happy gardening!

Kevin Smith,
Content Director
@kevinsmithgarden

Kevin

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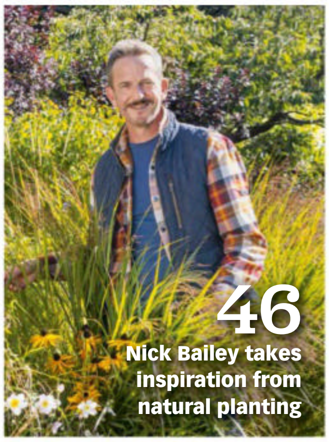

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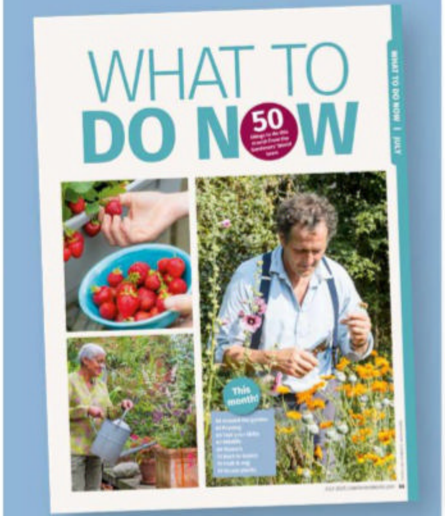

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We love July

When I was a child, I had an Aertex shirt. I don't know whether they still exist, but it was loose cotton and covered with tiny holes – I assume for ventilation. If I close my eyes on a hot July afternoon, I can transport myself back to my eight-year-old self lying on a bank feeling the tickly tips of the grass pressing through those ventilation holes to prickle my back. Odd how memory works sometimes. Nowadays, sadly, I spend less time lying on banks staring at the sky and more time weeding – such is growing up!

WORDS JAMES ALEXANDER-SINCLAIR

> "In July's embrace, the world comes alive"
>
> *Dr Shamim Ali*

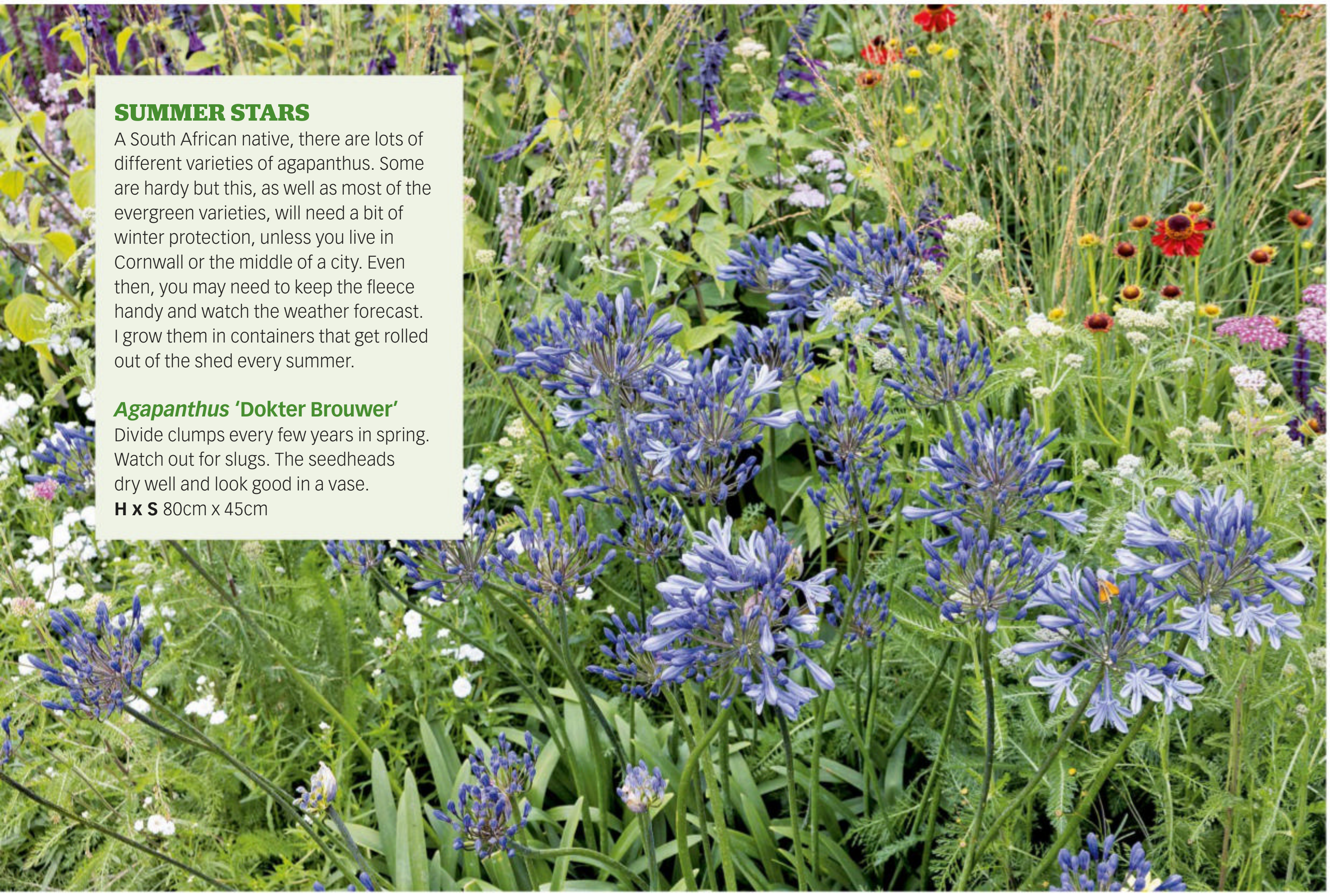
STAR OF THE MONTH

Ensete ventricosum 'Maurelii'

This is a pretty good representation of the spirit of July, the month of school holidays and full-blown summer. Gone are the refinements of June and we are into a riotous tumble of exuberance. Big leaves, bright colours: the early dahlias are just getting into their stride, the perennials are still going for it and that packet of marigold seed you planted just for the hell of it is paying off big time. This is the sort of planting that lifts the spirits, and sends you off to work in the morning with a spring in your step and a big grin on your face.

This is the Ethiopian banana, so needs a frost-free location to shelter over winter. Grows fast in good soil and lots of sunshine. **Height x Spread** 3.5m x 3.5m

PHOTO: PAUL DEBOIS

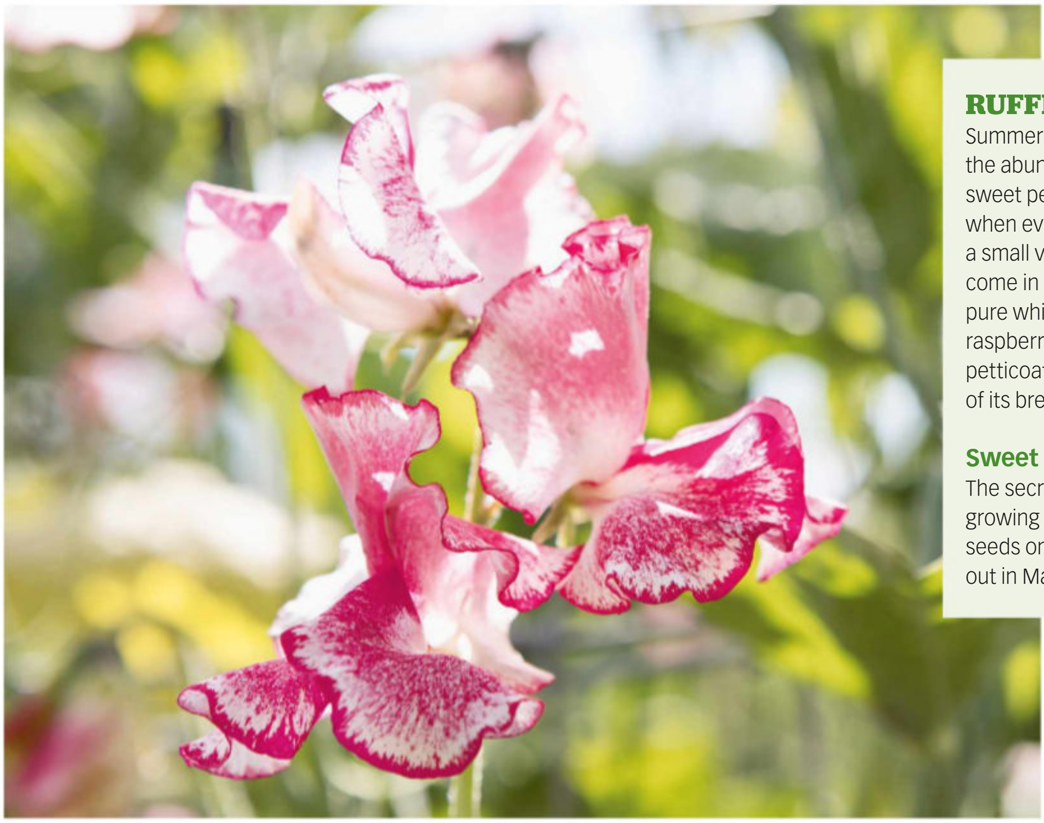


SUMMER STARS

A South African native, there are lots of different varieties of agapanthus. Some are hardy but this, as well as most of the evergreen varieties, will need a bit of winter protection, unless you live in Cornwall or the middle of a city. Even then, you may need to keep the fleece handy and watch the weather forecast. I grow them in containers that get rolled out of the shed every summer.

Agapanthus 'Dokter Brouwer'

Divide clumps every few years in spring. Watch out for slugs. The seedheads dry well and look good in a vase. **H x S** 80cm x 45cm



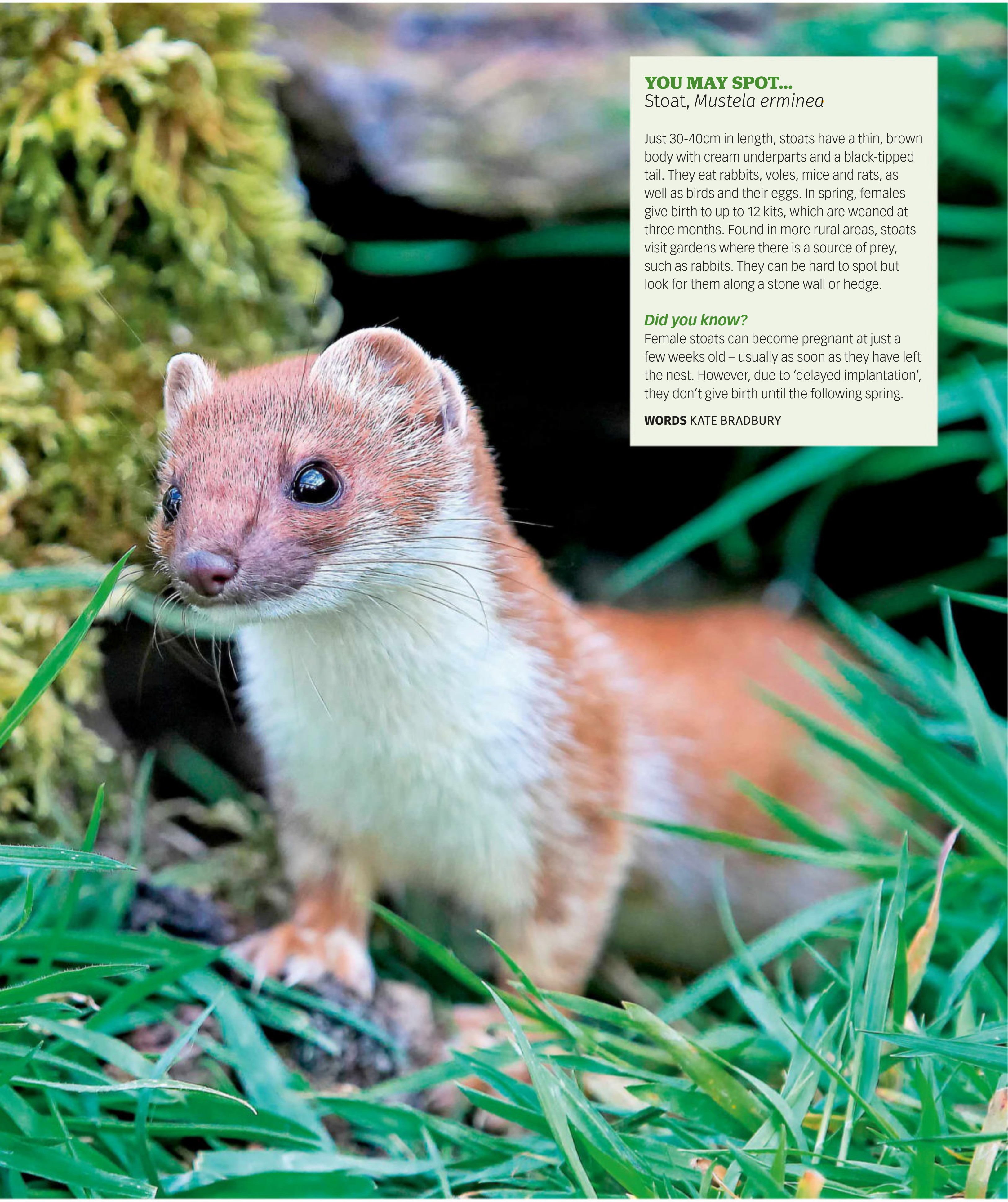
RUFFLE UP

Summer would not be summer without the abundance and delicious scent of sweet peas. There is definitely a moment when every room in my house is home to a small vase of these divine flowers. They come in a wide range of colours, from pure white to deep purple. This one is a bit raspberry ripple meets flamenco dancer's petticoats. It was named after the sister of its breeder, Derek Heathcote.

Sweet pea 'Linda Carole'

The secret to successful sweet pea growing is to think ahead: ideally sow seeds on Boxing Day ready for planting out in May. **H x S** 2m x 1m

PHOTOS: ALAMY/IMAGEBROKER.COM; SARAH CUTTLE; PAUL DEBOIS



YOU MAY SPOT...

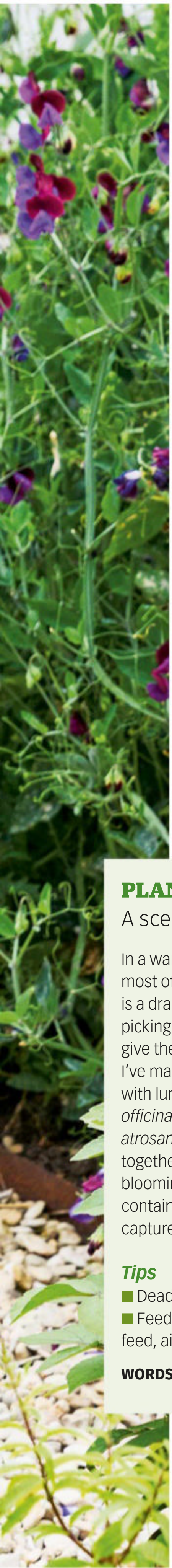
Stoat, *Mustela erminea*

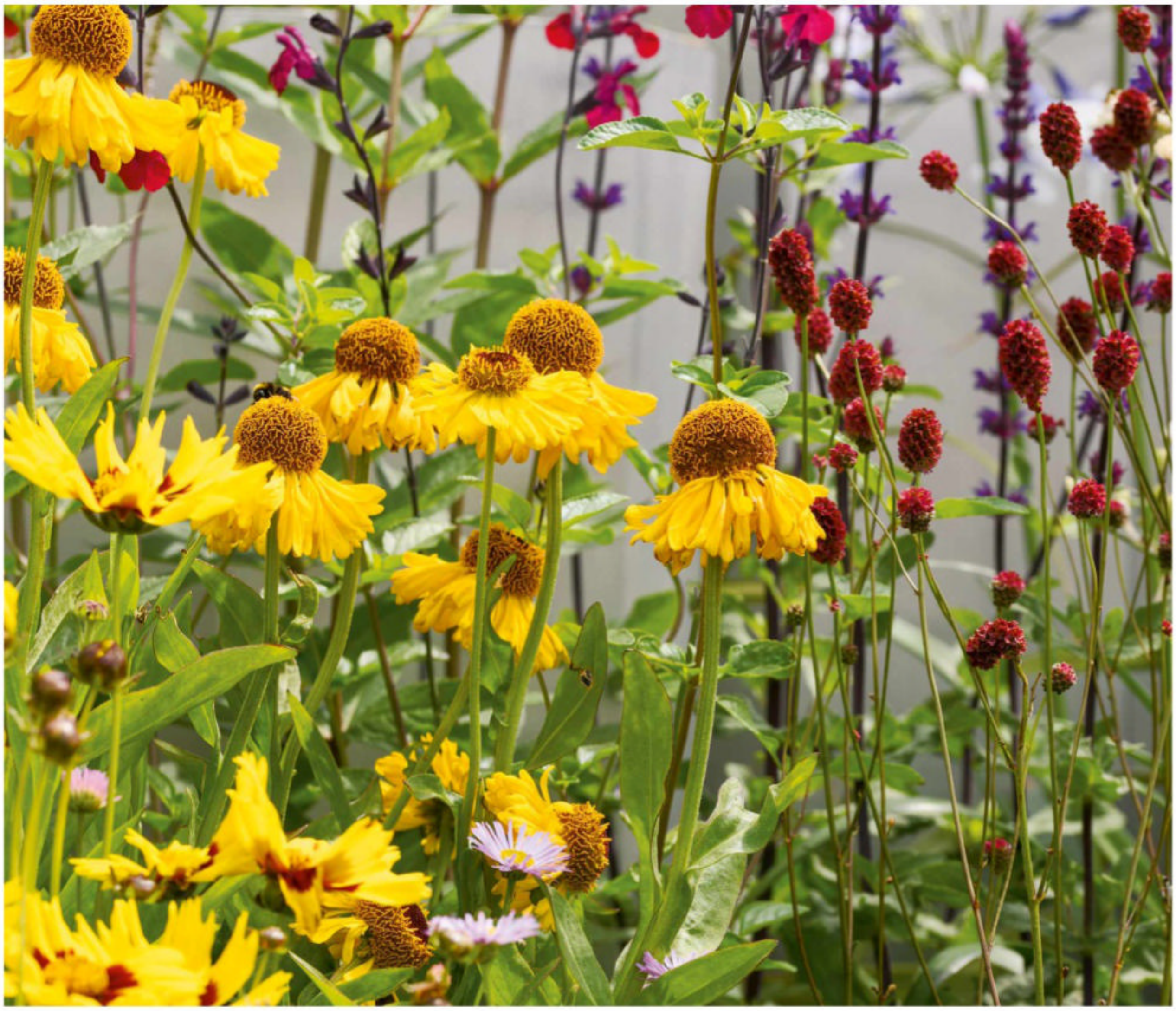
Just 30-40cm in length, stoats have a thin, brown body with cream underparts and a black-tipped tail. They eat rabbits, voles, mice and rats, as well as birds and their eggs. In spring, females give birth to up to 12 kits, which are weaned at three months. Found in more rural areas, stoats visit gardens where there is a source of prey, such as rabbits. They can be hard to spot but look for them along a stone wall or hedge.

Did you know?

Female stoats can become pregnant at just a few weeks old – usually as soon as they have left the nest. However, due to 'delayed implantation', they don't give birth until the following spring.

WORDS KATE BRADBURY





PLANT UP A POT…

A scent-sational quartet

In a warm and sheltered spot, this richly fragrant container makes the most of long, sunny days outside. The Corten-steel vessel (25cm wide) is a dramatic contrast to the luxurious nature of the plants it holds while picking up on their colours. Roses are wonderful in pots as long as you give them enough depth of compost to accommodate their deep roots. I've matched the dark-eyed, pink, single rose *Rosa* For Your Eyes Only with luminous *Penstemon* 'Firebird', a felty-leafed purple sage (*Salvia officinalis* 'Purpurascens') and a chocolate cosmos (*Cosmos atrosanguineus*), still in bud in this image. The four plants work well together due to their different shapes and all are super-long flowering, blooming throughout summer. Choosing the right position for a new container is part of the fun. Place this one in a warm, sheltered spot to capture and maximise the fragrance of its plants and flowers.

Tips

- Deadhead the rose regularly to encourage repeat flowering.
- Feed the container weekly during summer using a liquid seaweed feed, aiming the jet of fluid at the compost rather than the flowers.

WORDS LUCY BELLAMY

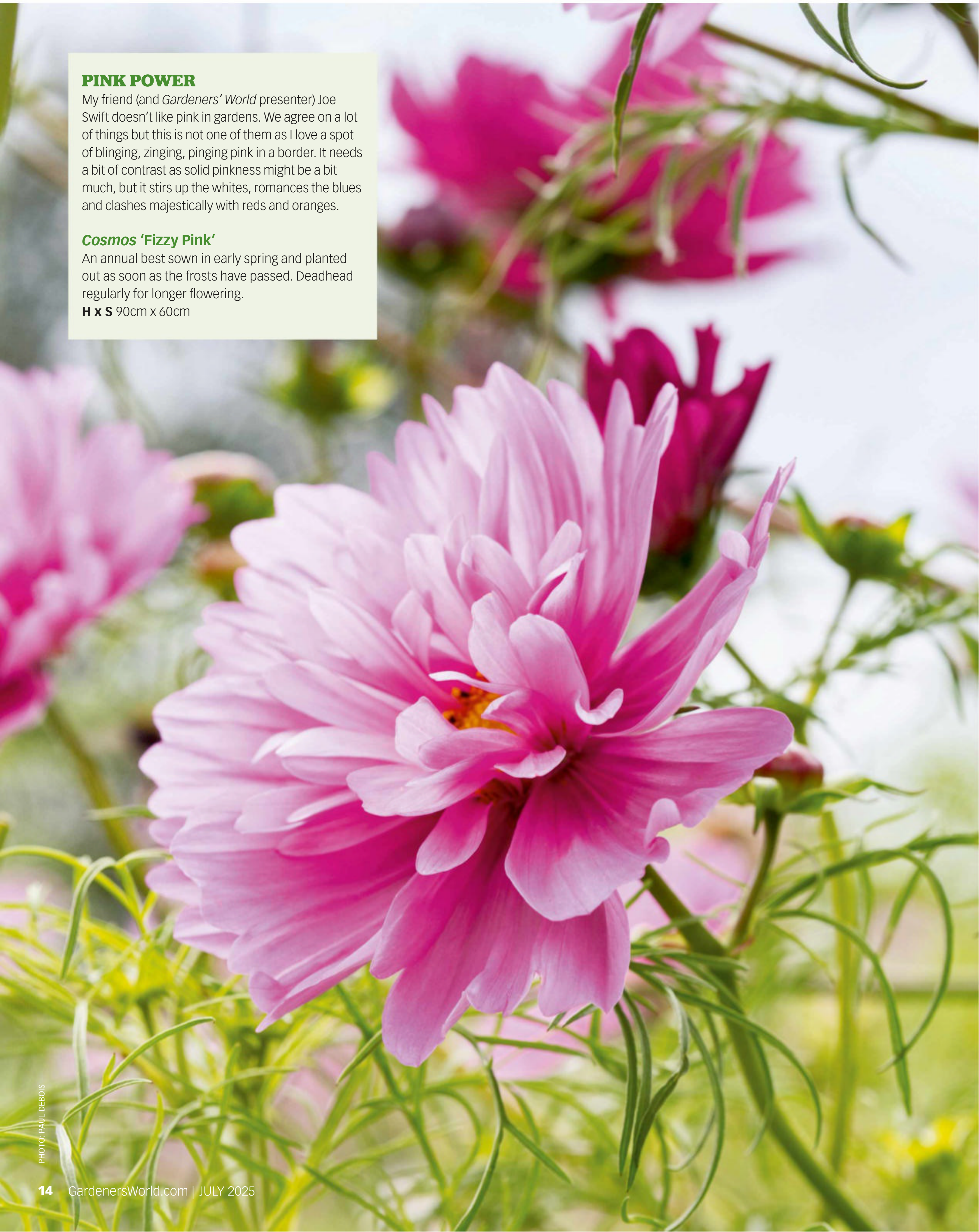
CURE FOR ILLS

The common name of this plant from North America is sneezeweed. This is because it was often ground into a sort of snuff, which (unsurprisingly) made people sneeze violently as a treatment for head colds and other ailments. Fortunately, *BBC Gardeners' World Magazine* readers don't need to resort to such measures, so you (and your pollinating insects) can sit back and appreciate the vibrant colour instead.

Helenium 'The Bishop'

If you have a cold frame, try taking basal cuttings in spring. Sounds tricky, but this propagation method is pretty straightforward.
H x S 80cm x 40cm

HELENIUM WORDS: JAMES ALEXANDER-SINCLAIR
PHOTOS: JASON INGRAM



PINK POWER

My friend (and *Gardeners' World* presenter) Joe Swift doesn't like pink in gardens. We agree on a lot of things but this is not one of them as I love a spot of blinging, zinging, pinging pink in a border. It needs a bit of contrast as solid pinkness might be a bit much, but it stirs up the whites, romances the blues and clashes majestically with reds and oranges.

Cosmos 'Fizzy Pink'

An annual best sown in early spring and planted out as soon as the frosts have passed. Deadhead regularly for longer flowering.

H x S 90cm x 60cm

PHOTO: PAUL DEBOIS

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Golf was once a stupid game. At least, to **Sue** it was. She couldn't imagine why anyone would want to spend all day hitting a small white ball, into a tiny hole.

That is until she saw the joy it brought her late husband Philip. It was enough to convince her to tee up for her first round. And every round since.

Twenty years later, she loves nothing more than the feeling of hitting a golf ball well. She swears it makes the grass look even greener.

It's why she left a gift in her Will to Cancer Research UK.

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Which is the first thing **Alan** did when he got a clean bill of health in August 2009. After being diagnosed with bowel cancer, he then underwent chemotherapy to shrink the tumour and make it easier to remove with surgery.

A treatment only made possible by CRUK. Not a stroke of luck.

These days, the only thing that keeps Alan up at night is wondering how long he can keep his stretch of par on the twelfth hole going.

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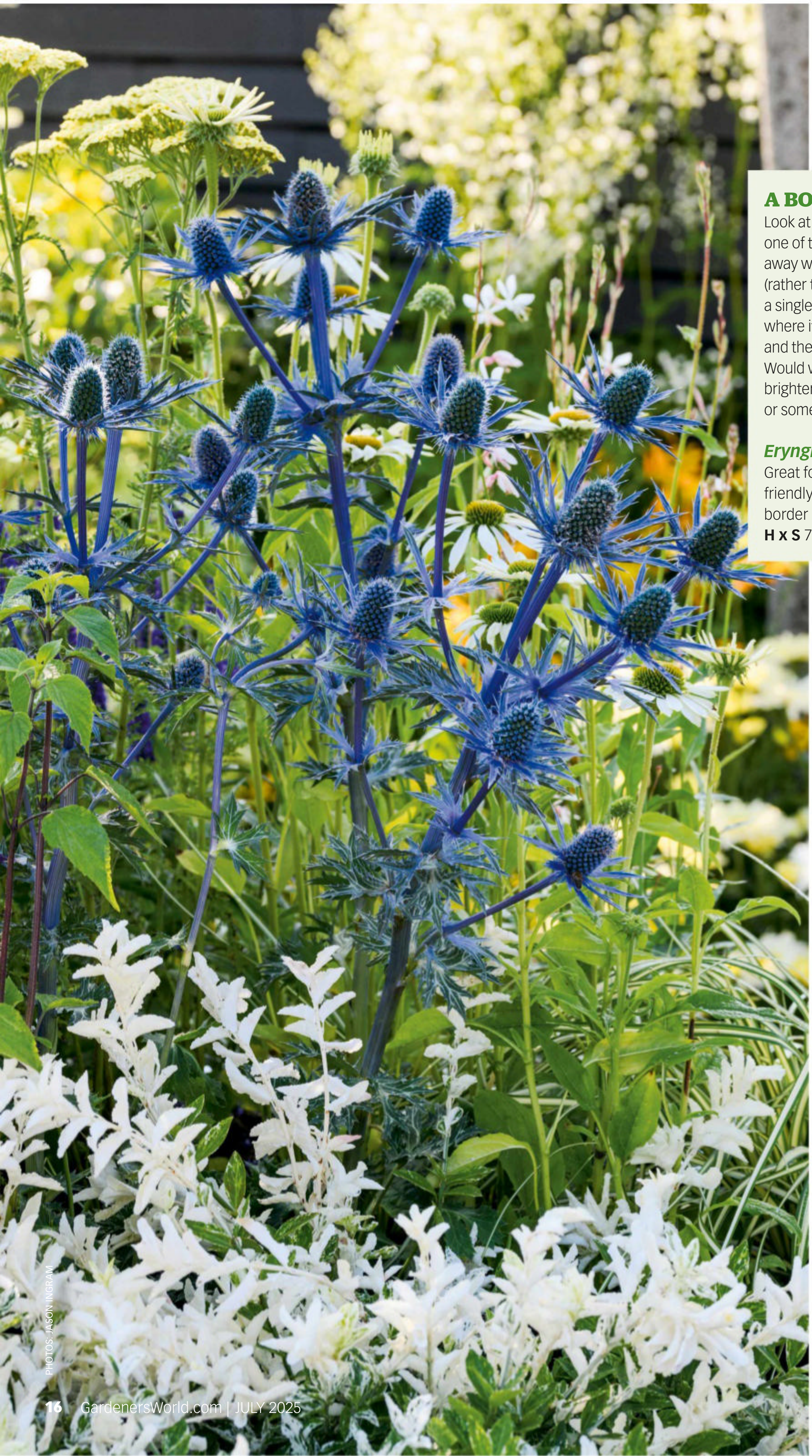

PHOTOS: JASON INGRAM

A BOLT FROM THE BLUE

Look at those extraordinary stems. This is one of those plants where you can get away with planting just one specimen (rather than a group) as it works better as a single exclamation mark. Especially here, where it stands out against silver leaves and the flowers of a white echinacea. Would work equally well with something brighter, like the pink cosmos on page 14 or some orange daylilies.

Eryngium Big Blue

Great for attracting butterflies and other friendly insects. Ideal in a dry, sunny border and good as cut flowers.

H x S 70cm x 60cm

TURN UP THE HEAT

Also known as bunny-eared lavender (for obvious reasons) and as such is much appreciated by children. It has all the scent and sizzle of the more conventional lavenders but with zippy purple and lilac flowers as a bonus. It is also better suited to smaller gardens as it's not as sprawly and louche in its habits. Give it as much heat as it can handle and a sharp, free-draining soil for maximum voom.

Lavandula stoechas

Easily propagated from summer cuttings. Great in containers but will need protection from frost in colder gardens.
H x S 40cm x 40cm

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The Full Monty

As a signifcant birthday approaches, **Monty** reflects on how attitudes to gardens and gardening have changed, and so much for the better

I tend not to make much of a deal about birthdays – they are a good excuse for a cake, if any were needed – but I treat them like the arrival of the first swallow or the first bright frost of autumn – a familiar marker I hope will return for at least one more year. But once you break through the 21 barrier, all subsequent birthdays with a nought attached inevitably give pause for reflection and, increasingly, thoughts about how best to spend the diminishing time ahead.

Seventy years ago, three score years and 10 was still thought of as your allotted span, with everything over and above that a bonus. But in those post-war years of the 1950s and 60s, almost everyone except the young seemed old and tired. I now realise they were exhausted by the war and longing for a quiet life, with pottering in the garden a luxury that few today can conceive. Both my parents died in their mid-sixties, burnt out and older than their years, too much of their allotted span used up before they reached 30.

Last summer, I was in a garden that was very proud of its rewilding, and in many ways rightly so – because it was very beautiful – but in a shed were three pictures. One was of a 'conventional' garden, which was derided for being clean lines, bare soil and repressive of nature, another that was organic and a bit looser, and finally the paragon, the same back garden rewilded and thus achieving perfection. But this showed a lack of understanding and empathy with life and gardens 70 years ago. Having dug for victory, now they dug for peace. Their desire for order and harmony was paramount and so the style of gardening was linear, controlling, chemical and productive. An orderly garden was a living antidote to the chaos of war.

In my lifetime I have seen huge changes to the way we garden and our attitude and relationship to the natural world. Well into the 1990s very few younger people gardened or had any real interest in gardening. I remember in the early 1980s, when Sarah and I were making our garden in London, none of our friends had any active interest. Percy Thrower looked and acted like anybody's idea of a grandfather and Geoff Hamilton like a middle-aged bloke in the pub. Both were rightly revered by their middle-aged audience but if, like us, you were in your twenties and loved gardens and gardening, there was no one in the media to identify with. I can remember listening avidly to Alan Titchmarsh in the early 1980s on *The Today Programme* (BBC Radio 4) on Saturday mornings, because he sounded young and enthusiastic rather than dispensing wisdom from the lofty but boring heights of age and experience.

> *“In the 1990s very few younger people gardened or had any real interest”*

Thankfully that has changed. While I have now become a real-life grandfather and an establishment figure, there are lots of brilliant young gardeners challenging everything and engaging with gardens and the natural world with real knowledge, enthusiasm and energy. Nothing could please me more, even when I disagree with them.

I used to think that make-overs on television were somehow belittling gardening and reducing its magic and mystery. But I now think that programmes such as *Ground Force* (BBC2) in the 1990s were hugely influential and a good thing – as well as being great telly. Instead of the garden being an add-on that involved upkeep and drudgery, the programmes showed the possibility of making the garden in your own image without needing horticultural qualifications.

We made three series of *Big Dreams, Small Spaces* (BBC2) about 10 years ago, and without exception the transformations involved – all done by the owners themselves – empowered people to change their lives for the better through the medium of their garden. A garden was beginning to be seen as a creative, inspiring place that anybody could achieve. It also made connections with the natural world at their doorsteps.

We all know that this appreciation of nature at our doorstep hugely increased during the pandemic, and I think this is one of the biggest changes in my lifetime. Gardens are now our private nature reserves, whereas, 70 years ago, they were somewhere nature was mostly kept out.

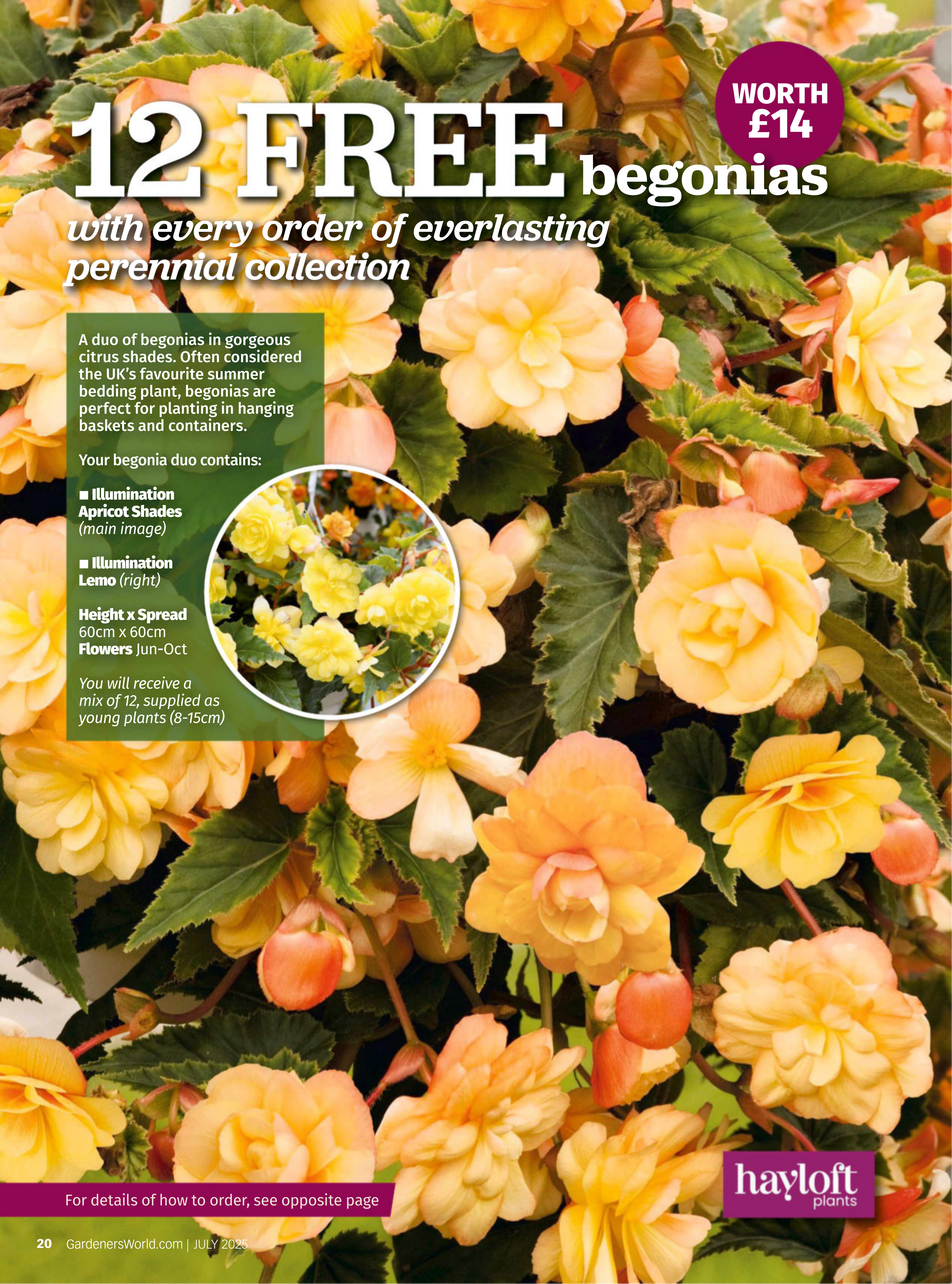
It can feel, with some justification, as if the world is currently in a tailspin with far too many things going horribly wrong. But on reflection, I think gardens and gardening are in a much better place than they were when, 70 years ago, I started out on this absurd, wonderful, strange business of being alive. Now, where's that cake? And I want candles, lots of candles!

Monty

PHOTO: JASON INGRAM

BBC TWO

MONTY ON TV Catch Monty and the *Gardeners' World* team on Friday nights this month – see TV listings. And savour the scent of summer at Longmeadow in our Summer Conversations podcast at **GardenersWorld.com/podcasts**



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H x S 60m x 60cm
F Jun-Aug

Delphinium 'Magic Fountains Lilac Rose'

H x S 90cm x 45cm
F Jun-Aug

Digitalis 'Candy Mountain'

H x S 1.4m x 60cm
F May-Jul

Echinacea purpurea 'White Swan'

H x S 60cm x 45cm
F Jun-Sep

Erigeron karvinskianus

H x S 30cm x 1m
F May-Oct

Scabiosa japonica 'Ritz Blue'

H x S 20cm x 20cm
F Jun-Sep

Armeria maritima 'Splendens'

H x S 20cm x 20cm
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Digitalis purpurea Sutton's Apricot

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Expert's choice

Thalictrum

With pretty, subtle, flowers and foliage, delicate meadow rue has earned our deep regard, says **Graham Rice**

Looking back 35 years, two dozen different thalictrums were offered by nurseries – and most of them needed hunting out. Now there are more than 140 available, with seven selected as RHS Award of Garden Merit winners! What's happened? Four things.

Firstly, we've all developed an appreciation for subtlety in our garden flowers. And while we haven't turned away from the big and bright, and the bold and colourful, we now enjoy plants with softer, more understated attractions. Thalictrums, with their tendency to open and airy flowerheads and more demure colouring, have exactly the qualities we've learned to appreciate.

Thalictrums also bring us two distinct seasons of interest: the mounds of early-spring foliage, prettily lobed and tinted in blue – like top-class columbine foliage, but without the leaf miner – are followed by upright stems topped by summer and autumn flowers.

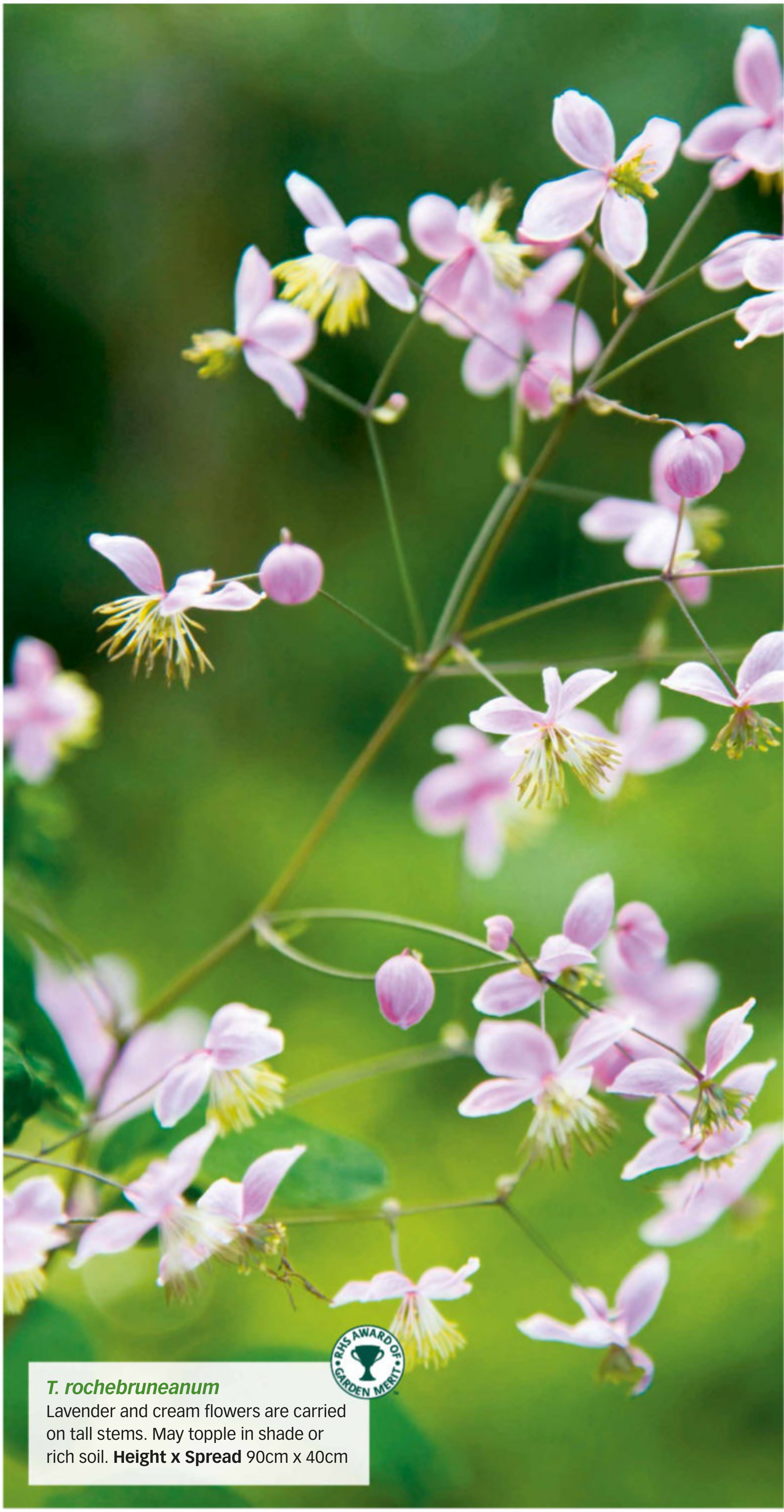
And we're no longer afraid of tall plants; for example, allowing *Verbena bonariensis* to self-sow towards the front of the border has taught us to look through it and appreciate everything else growing farther back. It's the same with thalictrums, some of which can reach 4m or more (of course, there are also some that reach little more than 15cm).

We now have so many more tempting thalictrums, and recent collections of unfamiliar variants from China and Korea are extending the range even farther. Time to choose.

Care

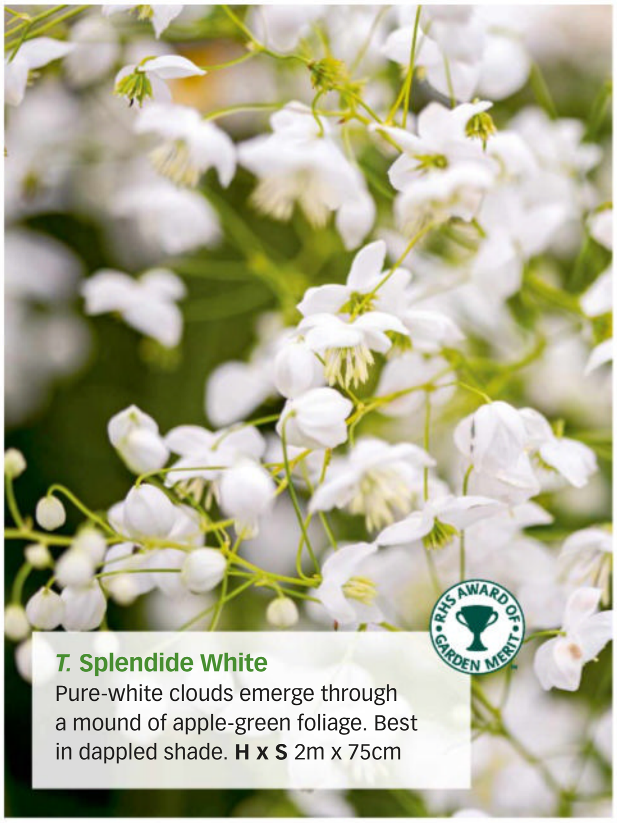
- Most are best in full sun, in soil that does not dry out. Not for parched conditions.
- Cut stems to the mound of foliage, or below, after flowering and soak well, then cut to the ground in late autumn.
- Stake taller varieties in windy spots.
- Flowers and foliage are good for cutting.

Where to buy bethchatto.co.uk, 01206 822007; claireaustin-hardyplants.co.uk, 01686 670342; cotswoldgardenflowers.co.uk, 01386 422829

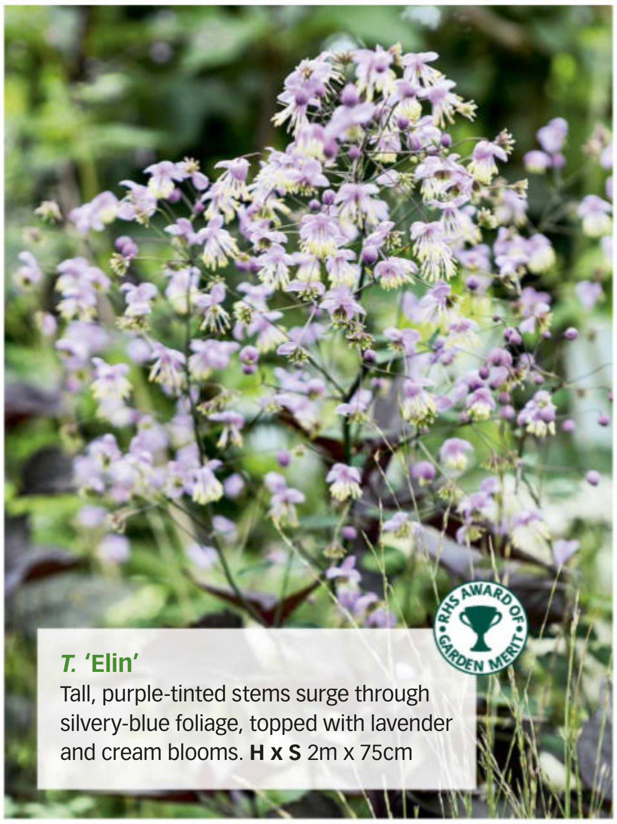


T. rochebruneanum
Lavender and cream flowers are carried on tall stems. May topple in shade or rich soil. **Height x Spread** 90cm x 40cm

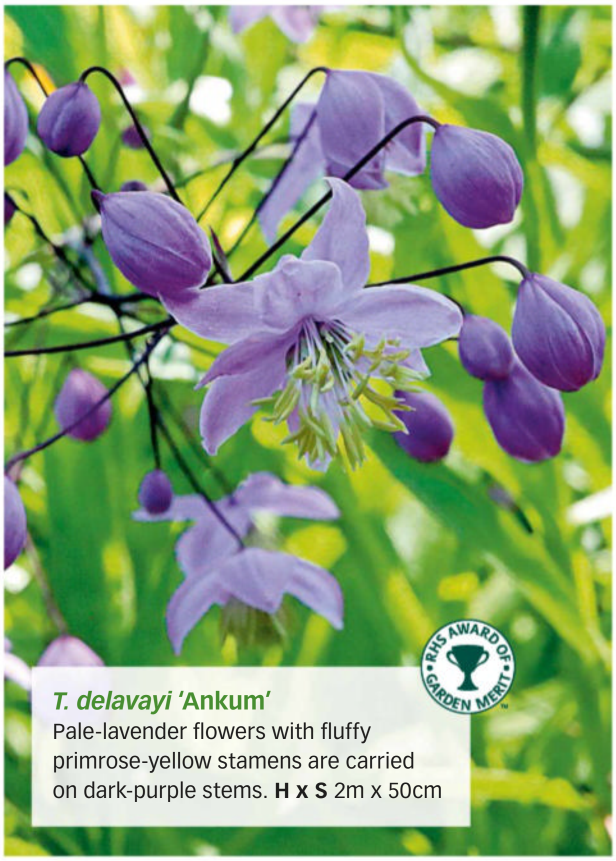
RHS AWARD OF GARDEN MERIT



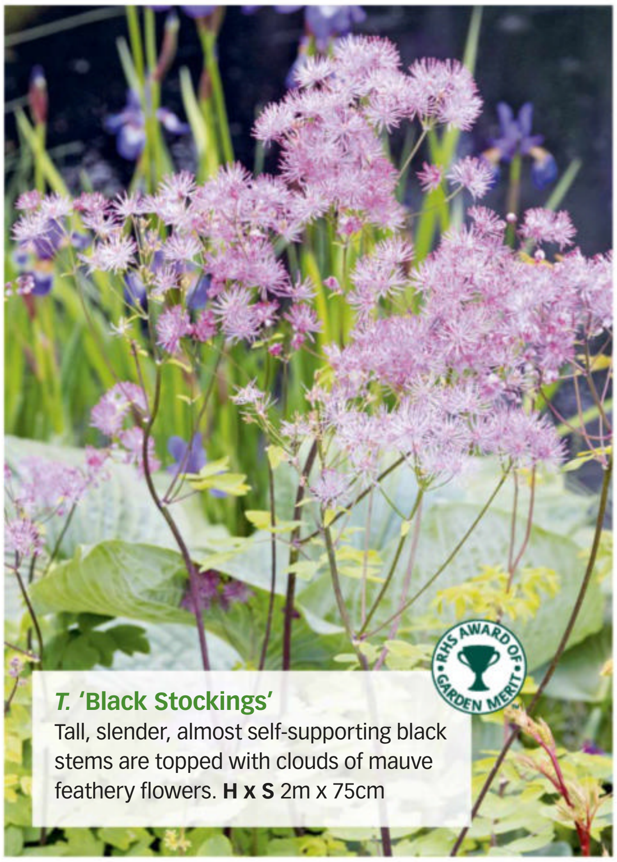
***T.* Splendide White**
Pure-white clouds emerge through a mound of apple-green foliage. Best in dappled shade. **H x S** 2m x 75cm



***T.* 'Elin'**
Tall, purple-tinted stems surge through silvery-blue foliage, topped with lavender and cream blooms. **H x S** 2m x 75cm



***T. delavayi* 'Ankum'**
Pale-lavender flowers with fluffy primrose-yellow stamens are carried on dark-purple stems. **H x S** 2m x 50cm



***T.* 'Black Stockings'**
Tall, slender, almost self-supporting black stems are topped with clouds of mauve feathery flowers. **H x S** 2m x 75cm

Thalictrum

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Planting			🟩	🟩								
Flowering						🟥	🟥	🟥	🟥			

PHOTOS: ALAMY/LEONIE LAMBERT, THRILLERFILLERSPILLER; PAUL DEBOIS; JASON INGRAM

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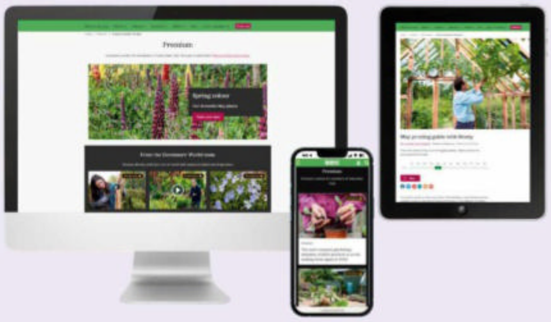

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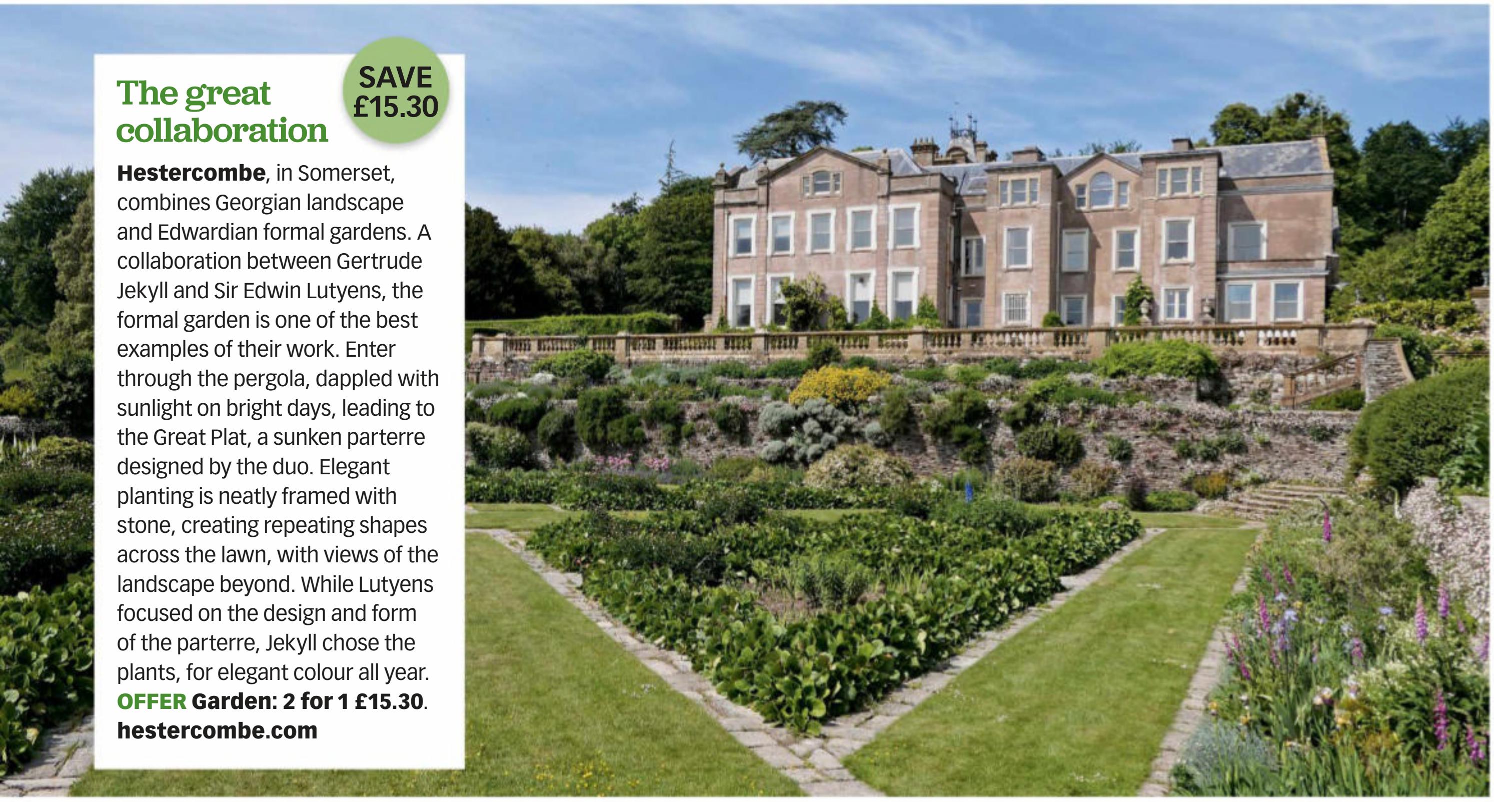
Formal invitations

With symmetrical planting, neatly clipped parterres and elegant statues, this month we showcase some of the fine formal gardens in our **2 for 1 Gardens** scheme



The great collaboration

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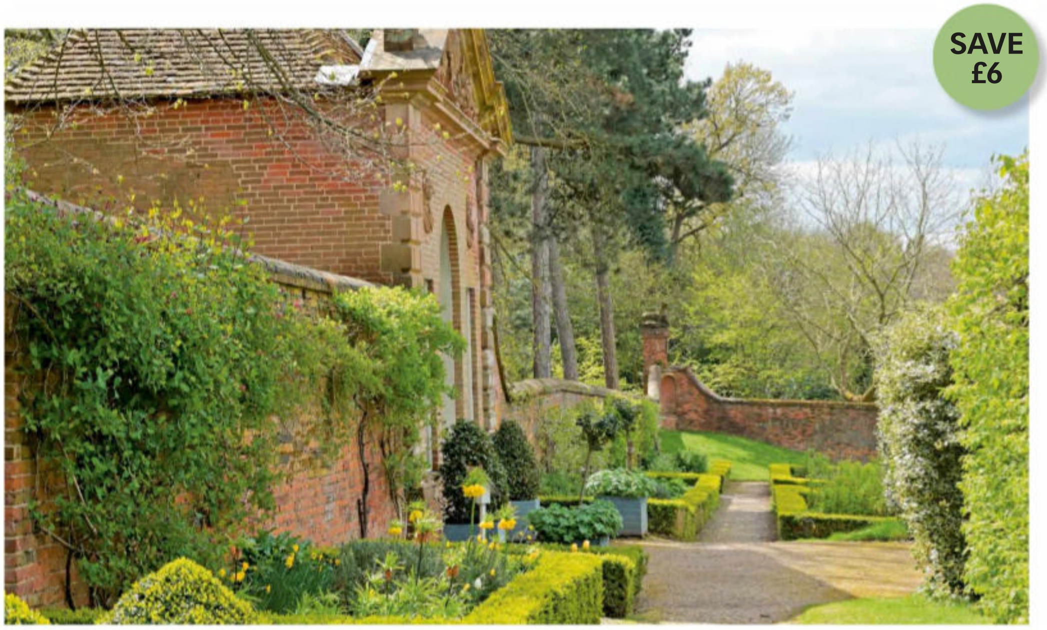
Hestercombe, in Somerset, combines Georgian landscape and Edwardian formal gardens. A collaboration between Gertrude Jekyll and Sir Edwin Lutyens, the formal garden is one of the best examples of their work. Enter through the pergola, dappled with sunlight on bright days, leading to the Great Plat, a sunken parterre designed by the duo. Elegant planting is neatly framed with stone, creating repeating shapes across the lawn, with views of the landscape beyond. While Lutyens focused on the design and form of the parterre, Jekyll chose the plants, for elegant colour all year. **OFFER Garden: 2 for 1 £15.30. hestercombe.com**



Into the wilderness

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The Grade II* listed, 10-acre **Castle Bromwich Historic Gardens**, in the West Midlands, are a rare example of 18th-century formal English garden design. Peek through the 'claire-voie' into the Lower Wilderness. Far from what we would now consider a wilderness, this area features clipped hedging and shrubs that create neat paths, and a decorative pond dating from 1741. Another grand formal feature is the orangery, built in 1729 as decoration for the walled garden and home to citrus trees. **OFFER Garden: 2 for 1 £6**, single reduced to £5. **castlebromwichhallgardens.org.uk**

PHOTOS: TOM ARBER; RICHARD BATTYE; JO COUNDS; DAN STANLEY

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Victorian splendour

The formal terrace at **Harewood House**, in West Yorkshire, is a grand and iconic Victorian garden. It was created in the 1840s by Sir Charles Barry, who also famously designed the Houses of Parliament. Its parterre and formal planting include clipped yews and symmetrical box hedging, which form geometric patterns to echo the neo-classical architecture of the house. Statues and fountains elegantly punctuate each quadrant. In summer, colourful dahlias, roses and climbers add to the spectacle. **OFFER House & garden: 2 for 1 £14-£24.95** (price varies), single reduced by 50%. Booking recommended, use online code GWMEMBER. **harewood.org**

SAVE UP TO £17

Dramatic descent

Laid out as a series of terraces, **Powis Castle Gardens**, in Powys, is one of the UK's few surviving baroque gardens. As you descend, each of its 17th-century terraces is full of character. Their most famous feature are the giant yews, more than 9m tall, 300 years old, and clipped into cloud-like 'tumps'.

In the Edwardian formal garden, ancient fruit trees line elegant avenues, and the herbaceous border oozes with scent and colour. The nearby fountain garden offers formal water features and topiary. **OFFER Castle & garden: 2 for 1 £17 (£12 off-peak). nationaltrust.org.uk/powis**

SAVE £10

Grand designs

Described by Queen Victoria as a "very fine garden, with terraces like an old French garden" and with strong Italian influences, **Drummond Gardens**, in Perthshire, may not be what you might expect from a Scottish garden. But here lies one of the finest formal gardens in Europe. The spectacular parterre spans nine acres and includes five miles of box hedging, with the central area based on the St Andrew's flag. Lavender, santolina and roses adorn the masterpiece. At the centre is an obelisk sundial carved in 1630, with more than 60 dials and 131 ways to tell the time. Beyond is a collection of mature trees, including a beech planted by Queen Victoria in 1842. **OFFER Garden: 2 for 1 £10. drummondcastlegardens.co.uk**

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PHOTO: JASON INGRAM

Dahlias bloom from midsummer to the first frosts, and the more flowers you cut, the more they will produce

Flower *power!*

Homegrown flowers are a great way to bring the outdoors in, and fill your home with colour and scent. **Monty** looks at what to grow and how to get the best blooms

> *“You can gather* **armfuls of gorgeous flowers** *for the cost of a packet of* **seed**, *while knowing that the garden remains untouched”*

The best way to get an abundance of cut flowers, be it for a wedding or a bedside posy, is to grow them yourself. You can, as I often do, simply go outside into the garden and snip a handful of whatever is looking really good and bring that part of the garden indoors. This might be half a dozen little snowdrops or a great bunch of midsummer blooms, but inevitably it will be directed and inspired by two things. The first is what is looking good and catching your heart on that particular day and, critically, the second will be what the garden can spare.

This is the great problem with cutting great bunches of flowers. While it might make the house look much better, it often makes the garden look noticeably worse. You rob Peter to pay Paul. You could, of course, go out and buy cut flowers but they are alarmingly expensive and usually not nearly as nice as those from your garden. Because garden plants are much better scented, much more abundant, more varied and more idiosyncratic than their commercial equivalents, so the flower arrangements in your house will share all those qualities too.

Grow for cutting

The solution is to grow flowers specifically for cutting. You can do this in containers or a spare patch of ground, or make a virtue of it and have an area of the garden dedicated to growing cut flowers, which can look wonderful in its own right. At Longmeadow we have two new raised beds for cut flowers that we put in last year in front of the wooden greenhouse, and my friend Sarah Raven – the doyenne of cut-flower growing – created a large, magnificent garden at Perch Hill in East Sussex based around cut flowers.

There are many advantages to creating a dedicated area or cut-flower bed. Not only does it mean that you can grow your favourite flowers for the house without ravaging the borders, but also you can create the best possible conditions for growing them, so they perform to their best advantage in a vase – which is not always the case in a border.

For a start, you can cram everything together much more intensively than in a normal flower border. As long as the ground is well prepared and you mulch with a good layer of compost each spring, this intensity of planting will not matter and most flowers will have longer stems as a result of it. But the site must be free of all shade and of trees and large hedges

PHOTOS: JASON INGRAM

Even just one wigwam of sweet peas will give you enough flowers to fill your home with scent for many months

Gladioli and dahlias are easy to grow, and make impressive cut flowers with a long vase life

> *“You can cram everything together more intensively than in a normal flower border”*

that will compete for water and nutrition. It should also have good shelter from the wind as the last thing you need is for the flowers to be bashed about and battered. In fact, the best way to treat a cutting garden is as though it was intended for growing vegetables and it is often easiest to dedicate a corner of an existing vegetable patch to it. It will need a similar amount of preparation and attention to the nutrition and condition of the soil if it is to produce a healthy ‘crop’ of flowers for you every year. It will also need more watering than a normal border.

Cut-and-come-again plants – such as dahlias, cosmos and sweet peas – will bear repeated harvesting and will go on producing fresh flowers until they either set seed or become exhausted at the end of the growing season. Collecting the flowers has exactly the same effect as deadheading, but instead of removing the spent blooms you select them when they are at their very best. This does not harm or affect the plant at all, as it will simply produce more flowers to replace them. In fact, observing how long it takes for the flowers to replace themselves is a good indicator of how to manage your picking to maximise the flowers for any specific date. Sweet peas are best picked every 10 days or so, dahlias more frequently. Although many perennials will produce more flowers after a picking, by far the most productive way to fill your garden and house with flowers is to concentrate on annuals – most of which can be grown from seed and are therefore very good value.

It is a little late in the year for sowing hardy annuals such as nigella, poppies,

Monty's tips for cutting flowers

- Pick first thing in the morning or last thing at night. The flowers will last longer as a result. I often carry a bucket of water into the garden with me, and put the cut flowers straight into this so they can stand overnight in a cool shed and then be arranged in the morning.
- Strip off at least half the foliage, leaving the lower section of each stem bare. Again, this will ensure longer vase life.
- Restore flower stems that are flopping over by searing the ends for 30 seconds (no more) in boiling water.
- Cut the stems as long as possible and just above a new shoot or leaf. This will ensure that there are sideshoots remaining, from which the next batch of blooms will grow.

> *"The most productive way to fill your house with flowers is to concentrate on annuals"*

bupleurum, marigolds and cornflowers, as they are programmed to flower and develop seed earlier in the summer in response to light levels rather than temperature. But they are certainly worth trying if you can sow before the end of May.

Annuals are best sown directly where they are to grow as soon as the soil warms up in spring, or, if you are keen, in autumn. As long as the ground is very well drained, they will survive winter cold and flower weeks ahead of spring sowings. They will also be hardier and better able to cope with late frosts. Ideally, I sow some in autumn and then a second batch in spring to create an extra-long flowering season.

May and June are the best months to sow biennials such as wallflowers, forget-me-nots, sweet rocket, sweet Williams or foxgloves, and then they can be planted into their flowering position in September, to produce blooms next spring.

Most bulbs make ideal cut flowers and tulips, daffodils, hyacinths, alliums, lilies and gladioli are all easy to grow in rows, which, perhaps surprisingly, look really good as well as making them easy to pick. I always dig a trench and put a generous amount of grit in the bottom, then plant the bulbs. I space them very close together for two reasons: I'll have more plants and their stems will be straighter than they would be in a border or pot. For maximum-quality blooms, the bulbs should be lifted and replaced every year, but the old ones can be put into a border where they will give good border service for a while to come.

Shrubs for cutting

If you have the room, shrubs can also be grown for cutting. I like drifting round the cottage garden picking a rose here and a rose there from any or all of the 50 different shrub roses there. And some shrubs you can grow just for flowers – like lilac. This can be pruned hard every year to encourage large blooms on a short, multi-stemmed shrub, which is not much good structurally but is fantastic for flowers. *Hydrangea paniculata* 'Grandiflora' is another shrub that can be chopped back hard each March to produce a mass of white flowers that are great for arranging. I have real trouble growing cotinus in our borders because it gets swamped by surrounding herbaceous plants, but in a cutting bed the dusky purple leaves and powdery pink inflorescences can grow freely and are magnificent when cut.

What I like best about growing plants just for cutting is that it encourages generosity and profligacy. You can gather armfuls of gorgeous flowers for the cost of a packet of seed and fill the house while knowing that the garden remains untouched. It's the best of both worlds. ☐

PHOTO: JASON INGRAM

NEXT MONTH Monty reveals why he created a fragrant seating area – and how you can make your own

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NO-FEAR GARDENING

PART 3: KEEPING THE FLOWERS GOING

A few simple jobs this month can keep your flowers blooming for longer and help you prepare next year's displays for free, says **Frances Tophill**

Flowers look amazing in the garden, and they have the added benefit of attracting and nourishing pollinators, who badly need our help, so maximising our flower power is really good for us and the creatures who share our space.

Deadheading blooms that have gone over, like repeat-flowering roses or cosmos, will keep more flowers coming. Staking or training flowers that are about to bloom can keep them standing tall when those heavy flowers open, and feeding our flowering plants with a high-potash feed, such as tomato fertiliser, will stop them running out of steam.

This is also a good time to start planning next year's flowers, to fill any gaps or add different colours. And while the weather is warm, it's the start of the seed saving season, ready for sowing now or next year. Decide and note which plants you will divide in the autumn and start taking semi-ripe or softwood cuttings to create more of your favourites.

If you're starting a new garden, balcony or window box and want summer flowers for the rest of this season and next year, this is the perfect time to visit a nursery and find plants that are just coming into flower now. They might be herbaceous perennials that you can rely on for years to come, or glorious summer annuals, ready to plant now that will only last until autumn, either because their natural lifecycle ends or the cold kills them off. But if you like what you find, make a note to save money by sowing and growing the same ones next year.

PHOTO: SARAH CUTTLE. THANKS TO CADHAY, DEVON

TRAINING AND TYING IN YOUR FLOWERS

Heavy flowers like gladiolus can cause stems to flop and collapse, so avoid this by staking with canes and tying them in or putting in supports before the stems get too tall.

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Keeping fresh cuttings in an unheated frame will help create good conditions for rooting success now

TAKING CUTTINGS

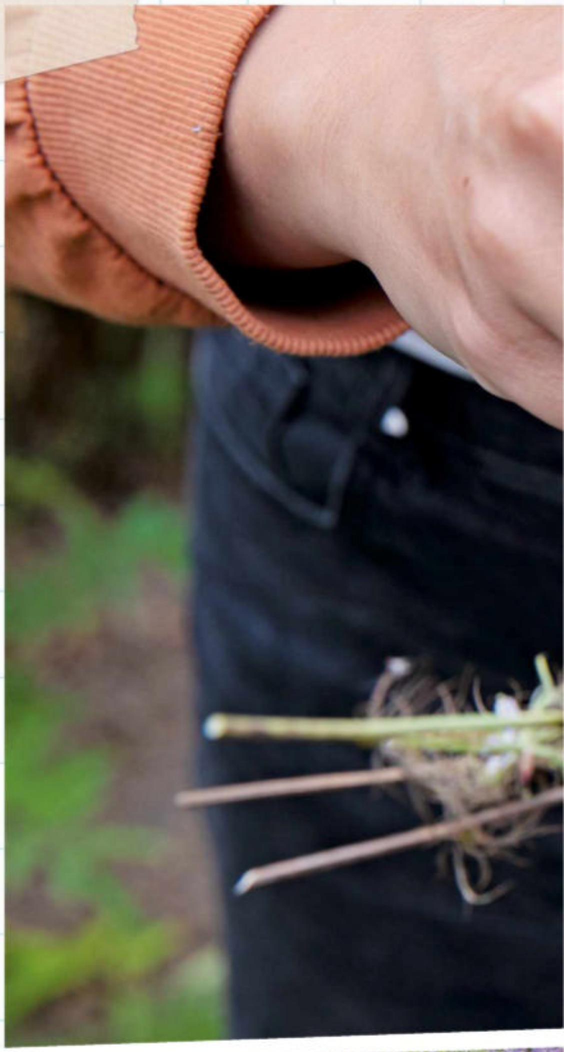
Taking cuttings is immensely satisfying. It sounds like science fiction that if you cut a piece off a plant and stick it into soil or compost, the cells in that stem or leaf will modify and change into root cells, but they do, and eventually form a whole new plant. The key to success with cuttings is controlling temperature and moisture, and making sure you have enough nodes (buds that contain all the hormones that instigate this cellular transformation) on your cuttings.

Placing cuttings in a sheltered spot, like the unheated frame shown here, will help you regulate temperature and moisture. Cuttings should be kept moist while roots are forming, without the foliage being too wet. Water is crucial to the rooting process, but excessive moisture can induce rot. When a plant is still forming, it is particularly vulnerable to organisms like fungi and bacteria.

Roots form quickly in warmer temperatures, so July is generally a great month to take cuttings. Choose healthy, non-flowering stems that display the plant's typical characteristics. If a variegated plant has reverted to green, for instance, a cutting taken from the green part will remain green.

My simple method for taking cuttings is to cut your material in the dewy morning from the parent plant, just above a node. Put it in a sealed container with a damp tissue and take it for potting straight away. When you have filled your pot with compost, snip the cutting again, to just below the node this time, remove all the lower leaves except the top pair, and firm it into a dibbed hole in the flowerpot. Water this regularly. You will know roots have formed if you see them emerging from the holes under the pot.

PHOTO: SARAH CUTTLE. THANKS TO CADHAY, DEVON



COLLECTING AND SOWING SEEDS

Saving and sowing your own seed is an enjoyable activity and it can save you a fortune in the spring. There is another really nice benefit to collecting your own seeds and that is in increasing the genetic diversity of the flowers you are growing. This can help a species to build resilience to problems like pests and diseases in the future.

There are a few crucial things to remember when you are collecting and storing seeds to enhance your success. Make sure your seeds are actually ripe. It isn't always easy to tell when they are ripe but generally the pod will turn brown. It might also rattle when shaken. If you collect seeds that are not yet ripe, they will not be viable and will not germinate. They will probably also be hard to dry out and store, as their moisture content will be high.

Seeds tend to pour out, blow away or even burst from the pods (every species has a different means of dispersal) very readily once they are ripe, which can make collection easier, or harder.

Collect seeds on a warm, dry day, once the dew has evaporated. Use a paper bag and if in doubt, dry the seeds further on a windowsill or dehydrator. Then store fully dry seeds in a cool, dry place for next spring.

If they get at all damp or hot, they will quickly lose viability. Many flowers, like calendula, nigella, borage, nicotiana, verbena and forget-me-nots, will seed themselves and save you time. Although it is still sensible to collect a few of these species to sow in spring and gap-fill, as self-seeding isn't always reliable.

MY FAVOURITE PLANTS FOR SEED COLLECTING

- **Cornflowers**
- **Sweet peas**
- **Stocks**
- **Nasturtiums**
- **Sunflowers**
- **Cosmos**
- **Scabious**
- **Foxgloves**
- **Poppies**
- **Fennel**

TRIMMING AND DEADHEADING

Trimming and deadheading can prolong the flowering period, as plants that are unable to form seeds will put their energy into making more flowers instead. Deadheading also stops unwanted seed shedding. These flowers respond well to deadheading:

1 ***Alchemilla mollis*** – tends to brown after flowering, so cutting back faded flowers neatens it up and encourages fresh growth.

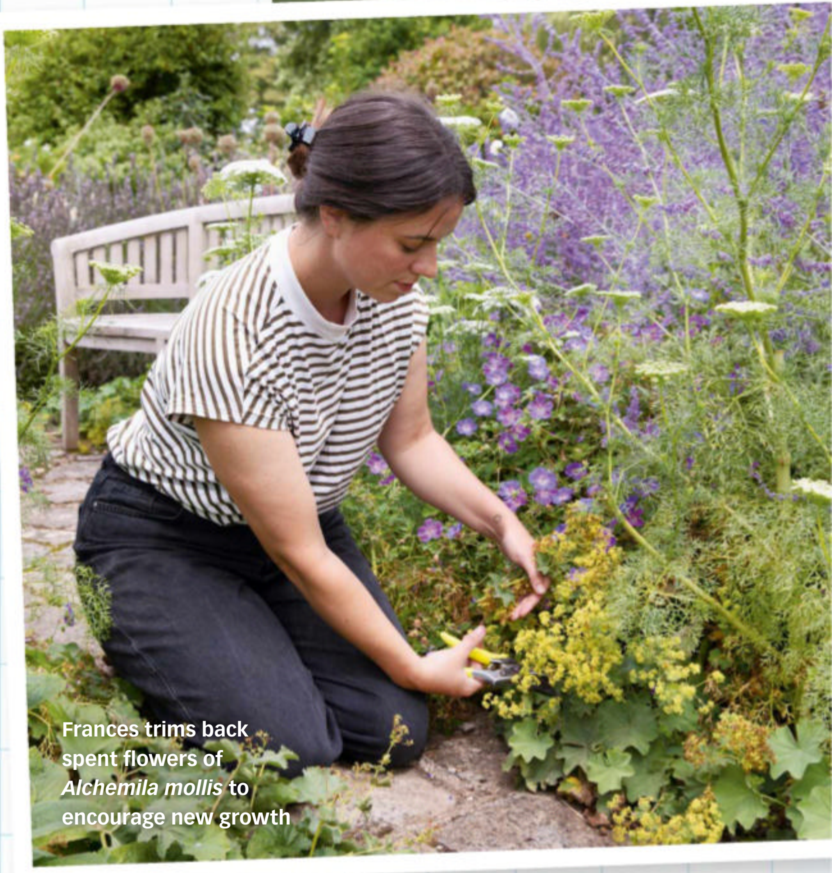
2 Dahlias – spent flowers look similar to unopened buds. The old ones are triangular shaped, so cut these back to the next set of stems.

3 Roses – usually produce their main flush of flowers in June, so deadheading now will give you a second if it's a repeater. If it's not, don't deadhead or you won't get hips or seeds.

4 Giant scabious (*Cephalaria gigantea*) – this self-seeds everywhere, but deadheading before the seeds have matured will stop the plant taking over.

5 Sweet peas – will continue to produce flowers if deadheaded regularly. Also keep them well watered to prolong flowering.

Listen to Frances' podcast for a glimpse into how she enjoys summer in her garden and on her allotment. Only at **GardenersWorld.com/podcast**



Frances trims back spent flowers of *Alchemila mollis* to encourage new growth

PHOTOS: SARAH CUTTLE. THANKS TO CADHAY, DEVON

Collecting seeds of self-seeders such as nigella is one way to fill any gaps next year

Removing seed pods of sweet peas will extend their flowering season

Snip the spent, triangular-shaped old flowers of dahlias to the next set of stems

Repeat-flowering roses can be deadheaded now to encourage a second flush later

NEXT MONTH Frances solves summer problems such as weeds, pests and diseases

Cultivating joy

Part 3 Colour

If you want joyful summer beds and borders for years to come then no-fuss planting schemes, combined with feel-good factor palettes, are a great place to start, says **Sue Kent**

PHOTOS JASON INGRAM

Sue plants her hydrangeas in blocks to maximise the colour from April to November

> “I noticed how each plant heightened the colour of the other – this was an epiphany”

A major part of my gardening joy is visual, and as my knowledge and observational powers have improved over decades of gardening, so has my love of experimenting with colour schemes. When I first came to my garden over 35 years ago, I looked at plants individually. I enjoyed the striking blue of the *Ceanothus*, the soft pink of my *Deutzia* and when I went shopping for plants, I was drawn to them by their colour. I knew nothing about gardening and this was just a gut reaction – I purchased the plants that caught my eye, not really thinking about how they would work with other plants in the garden.

This all changed when visiting my talented gardening friend in Cornwall and I saw a plant combination of *Erigeron* and *Lobelia* that grabbed my attention. I noticed how each plant heightened the colour of the other and my visual enjoyment was greatly increased. This was an epiphany, and the realisation gave me great excitement. I understood I could get better results if I paid more attention to how colours work together, and so began a journey, spending time visiting shows and open gardens at home and abroad to learn more. My garden now includes colourful plants and flowers all year round with continual inspiration to be had from experimenting with both traditional and more avant garde colour schemes.

I love how nature puts colours together and like so many of us, I am visually drawn to the apparent random colours of a wildflower meadow. My first experience of this was in France at The Gardens of Eyrignac Manor, where a jumble of delicate yellow, pink, blue and orange flowers among swathes of lush grass was arrestingly beautiful. I know I can’t recreate that exactly, but will always journey to see such hopeful and uplifting

> On a personal note, pink never fails to elevate my happiness levels and I include it in abundance

visions be they in France, at Highgrove, or on the Gower Peninsula in South Wales, where I live.

Further afield, where different climates enable other tender plants to thrive, colour can be used in unfamiliar ways. I visited Morocco and spent time at Jardin Majorelle in Marrakesh, where the plants were of predominantly green and silver hue, but terracotta and the bespoke Majorelle Blue were incorporated into hard landscaping features to amplify this planting and draw the eye through the garden.

ABOVE **Colour from borders can be brought indoors with inspiring vase displays**

In my own garden, however, I am becoming a bit of a monochromatic obsessive. I started with a white border, quickly realising that there are cream whites through to brilliant whites, and that different whites can clash. Making a white garden or border requires skill but looks great in a dark space or against a dark hedge when it really pops at nighttime, and it has a very calming effect on the senses.

Bright and beautiful

White gardens or borders are very traditional but when I was asked to do a beautiful border for Gardeners World Live in 2023, it was an opportunity to experiment and so I took a risk and opted for pink. It was a challenge knitting all the tones together, from white pink to purple pink and everything in between, but the

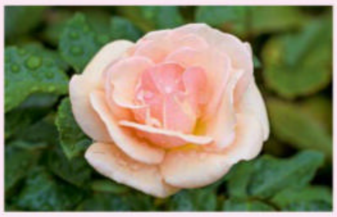
result was spectacular. Numerous people came up to say how much they had underestimated the positive power of pink. On a personal note, pink never fails to elevate my happiness levels and I include it in abundance in my garden as part of border displays, for cut flowers, and to inspire my art.

The success and the creative fun of the pink border has recently led me down the garden path to play with red, a colour I've not

Embrace the rainbow

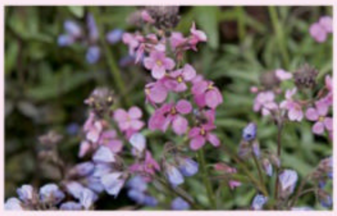
Here I have selected a variety of my favourite colourful plants and flower ideas that you could incorporate in your garden. Hopefully these can help inspire you to embrace the joy of colour

- **California poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*)** If you want to stop visitors in their tracks with colour and have a sunny dry site, the annual Californian poppy is fabulous. With the help of regular deadheading, the much-admired orange poppies by my back door flowered all summer last year and even though they can flop over as the season progresses, are worth it for the joy.



- **Roses** Roses are colour heaven as they come in so many hues including the creamy-white shrub rose Summer Memories, which blooms throughout the summer and thrives in my mixed border. In my Gardener's World Live border, I used pink shrub roses in many different shades that looked amazing in among flowers such as foxgloves, astrantias, and sweet peas.

- **Love-in-a-mist (*Nigella damascena*)** Airy, jewel-flowered love-in-a-mist, with its shades of blue, white or pink, is a must combined with feverfew and lavender. Although they flower at slightly different times, together they provide colour and interest for many months. Love-in-a-mist also has sculptural seedheads that are lovely in flower arrangements, can be picked while green for drying, or left on for self-seeding.



- ***Erysimum* 'Bowles's Mauve'** The longest flowering plant in my garden is the silver-leaved perennial Wallflower 'Bowles's Mauve', with its purple spires flowering through all but one of the mild winter months. This short-lived perennial can be easily renewed from cuttings. When deadheading, take flower and stem back to the leaves to prevent legginess.

- **Dahlias** Put off by the need to lift and store dahlias to protect them from frosts, these stunning flowers only appeared in my garden last year after I succumbed to the gorgeous red 'Berger's Record', which was the perfect shade for my red border. It's still too much work to dig them up so I'm going to leave my dahlias in the ground at the end of the year covered with a very deep mulch.

- **Hydrangeas** Hydrangeas are stalwarts in my garden, block planted by colour and providing interest from April to November. Their flower heads change from lime green in spring to pink in summer, fading to maroon and finally brown in autumn. Using different types of hydrangeas such as macrophylla (large round heads) serrata (lacecap) and panicle (cone shaped), provides further visual interest.

- **Feverfew (*Tanacetum parthenium*)** These cheery clusters of white petalled, yellow-centred daisy flowers against a backdrop of green ferny foliage really compliment the silver foliage of nearby lavender. Cutting feverfew back after flowering encourages a second flush in the autumn and although it's not fully hardy will seed quite happily, bringing ongoing colour for years to come.

PHOTOS: SARAH CUTTLE; JASON INGRAM

ABOVE Sue's Beautiful Border In The Pink at GW Live 2023 combined varying tones of pink to create an uplifting and positive viewer experience
RIGHT Sue's red border at home will be composed only of scarlet reds like these dahlias and salvia to create a more dynamic display

used before. My husband loves bright red with the same passion that I love pink and I'm now on a mission for a certain composition. Although like whites, pinks and yellows, there are many shades of red and I definitely have my favourites.

For one particular border, it has to be scarlet red, with no room for orangey or crimson hues. In this case, sticking to a defined palette will be the key to my success and, with the help of gardening catalogues and websites, which are often ordered or filtered by colour, I'm slowly creating a picture in my head of a red border that will provide maximum enjoyment for my ever-patient husband. Understanding the colour terminology used within such resources and building up a personal colour palette of specific plants and flowers can really help this process.

Say hello to yellow

Which brings me onto yellow – a colour that divides the horticultural world and invites discussion. For me the addition of pale yellow to the popular mix of blues, purple and whites, anchors my attention, makes me smile and feel uplifted. In my mixed border I very much like to have some pale yellow within the planting, such as bowl-flowered *Trollius* x *cultorum* 'Cheddar' or *Sisyrinchium striatum* with its wonderful lemon flower spikes and evergreen, sword-shaped foliage. For me, yellow is a must.

Colourful plants entertain on so many levels, in the garden and in vases within the house, lifting the mood of any room. I also get foodie pleasure from adding colourful brassicas, nasturtiums, and chive flowers to my salads, or borage and rose petals to drinks. And let's not forget green, the ever-present colour of our gardens, from the vibrant green of freshly-grown herbs such as parsley and basil in a salsa verde, refreshing the eyes and palate, to the green of leaves and lawn.

All in all, a garden full of colour is a garden full of joy and a playground for numerous avenues of creativity and self-expression. Even if you start with just a few pops of colour here and there, I encourage everyone to give it a try. ☐

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Master your mix

Nick's guide to matrix planting

Discover how to create dynamic, year-round meadow planting in your own garden with expert advice from **Nick Bailey**

Rudbeckias, asters and Japanese anemones create colourful drifts in among grasses such as miscanthus and molinia

PHOTO: NEIL HEPWORTH

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The fashion for meadow-esque plantings with flowering perennials woven between grasses has been with us since the early nineties. But these apparently wild pieces of planting are actually carefully composed groups, grown through a grid or matrix of supporting species, often grasses. Once established these plant communities require less maintenance than traditional borders, while providing long displays and supporting wildlife.

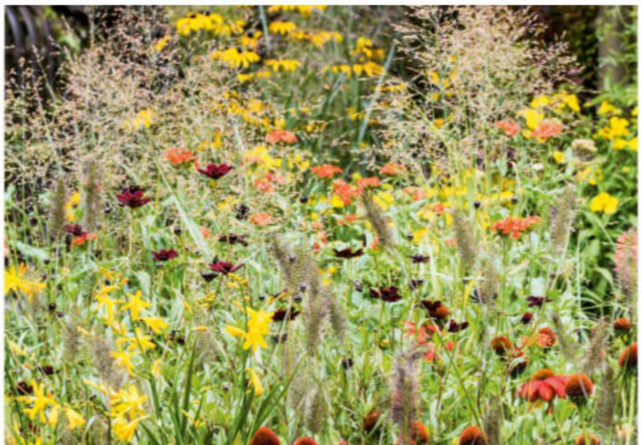
Back when we had just four TV channels to pick from, I was a student studying Landscape Design. I chose to write my dissertation on an emerging idea known as Matrix Planting. Skip forward several decades and that once sparkly new idea has become the mainstay of planting design through much of Europe, North America and beyond. Despite its longevity it could not be more in tune with modern thinking about gardens. Matrix planting is all about gardening closer to nature with less intervention, greater wildlife support and zero chemical input. So how does it work and can it be refined for small to medium domestic gardens?

The first aspect of this style to consider is environment. The species selected for a matrix planting need to be suited to their space in terms of soil type, precipitation, exposure, resilience, light and nutrition. Choosing the right plants for the right place will help cut out gardening interventions you would otherwise have to carry out, such as watering, feeding and staking. And those matrix appropriate species tend to be herbaceous perennials and grasses, which can be found growing together all over the world. Look to Asia and day-lilies that thrive among the blades of grassy meadows, or Europe where wild geraniums compete and perform alongside tall meadow grasses. At its heart matrix planting is a refined version of what nature already does.

Supporting cast

The next consideration is which of your selected plants are going to be the dominant or 'supporting' species of the matrix. Many designers, myself included, favour grasses for this purpose, using calamagrostis, stipa, luzula, miscanthus or others depending on the environment and which is best suited. This dominant species has a number of responsibilities in the matrix community. It should provide near year-round structure, protection and physical support for the other plants growing through it, while having its own aesthetic highlights such as dramatic autumn foliage or stately blooms.

I tend to dedicate 30-40 per cent of the planting space to my selected support species. I then scatter clusters of plants in groups of three to 30 across the area. Despite the style being called matrix, the aim is to have a soft natural feel. By that I mean planting the dominant species in repeating swathes, blobs and drifts across the area evenly but without being geometric – essentially the look you'd find in the wild. If you are seeking inspiration for this aesthetic then turn to the native prairies of North America where grasses and perennials jostle for the sun in their mutually supportive community.



Colourful combos Cosmos, crocosmia and echinacea provide bright contrast to grasses

Luzula nivea

Prairie perfection Look to native meadows for inspiration or gardens such as Sussex Prairies Wild

Molinia caerulea

Shape up Use perennials with contrasting forms like flat-headed achilleas and the spires of *Salvia nemorosa*

Rudbeckia

PHOTOS: PAUL DEBOIS; JASON INGRAM

Star players

Growing through the dominant or support species are the herbaceous perennials chosen to thrive in the matrix. Popular choices here include echinacea, monarda, lythrum and sanguisorba but your choice of perennial should be determined by what will thrive without intervention, for example monarda would struggle in free-draining soil and suffer from powdery mildew, whereas in a naturally moist soil it would thrive. Whichever species you choose repeat them across the planting area in groups from three to 30, or one to five, if you're gardening in a compact space, where matrix planting can work just as well. The combination of these repeated species is what gives the look its meadow appeal.

Once planted up your matrix meadow will take a few years to establish, and during this time it may need a bit of maintenance. This usually just means weeding or removing any species that are doing a little too well and potentially compromising their companions. Once fully established your interventions should be minimal apart from chopping the whole planting to the ground in February, after which you'll be rewarded with seasons of colour, interest, beauty and a display that is valuable to wildlife.

Sanguisorba

Stipa gigantea

Repeat pattern Clouds of yellow *Solidago* x *luteus* (goldenrod) bring late summer colour to planting schemes

Get growing: how to pick your plants

Matrix planting is usually self sustaining once established, and needs very little maintenance to keep plants looking good

Selecting grass species

Large scale matrix plantings such as the famed double borders designed by Piet Oudolf at RHS Wisley, Surrey, make use of tall grass species such as miscanthus, but in smaller gardens there are a range of more compact grasses that work well. These include pennisetum, *Stipa tenuissima*, *Molinia caerula* and some panicums.

In order to get the volume of grasses you need without breaking the bank, consider splitting each 3-litre pot of grasses into two or three plants. Use a bread knife to cut through the roots or back-to-back forks to prise the roots apart.

Choosing herbaceous perennial species

A number of more compact herbaceous perennial species suit small to average garden spaces. Depending on environmental conditions consider the following species: compact heleniums, *Salvia nemorosa*, *Rudbeckia* 'Little Goldstar', and *Hemerocallis* 'Stella de Oro'.

Growing it all together

Once you've selected your grass and perennial species it's time to plan the layout. It can often help to sketch a grid over a drawing of the area you are designing. Each square could be 25cm x 25cm, 50cm x 50cm, or 1m x 1m depending on the space you've allocated.

Start by adding different sized drifts or blobs of your dominant grass across the area. Think blobs and stripes repeated but with a degree of randomness, sort of like tiger stripes or leopard spot. Use the grid to help you proportion them evenly and if you are unsure have a look at the planting plans of Sarah Price or the pioneering team at Sheffield University headed up by Nigel Dunnett and James Hitchmough. Finally, evenly slot your repeating herbaceous perennial species through the grasses.

NEXT MONTH Nick explores how to incorporate edibles into the border

PHOTOS: JASON INGRAM; PAUL DEBOIS

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Root of the matter!

ASHLEY EDWARDS
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‘We all recognise the benefits of being outdoors, but how do we make sure that gardens are accessible to everyone, including those with specific mobility needs?’

Ashley Edwards is Head Gardener for Crocus, and a gardening broadcaster and writer. Find him on Instagram at @plantsforwellbeing

From initial design concept to the maintenance and selection of plants, what can gardeners and garden designers do to create spaces that are welcoming, inclusive and accessible to all – whatever the age, background or ability? It’s a question that’s come up a lot during my gardening career, first as Head Gardener for Horatio’s Garden – the national charity that creates outdoor spaces for NHS spinal injury centres in the UK – and more recently designing health-related gardens for BBC One’s *DIY SOS*.

According to government statistics, there are over 16 million people with a disability in the UK (24 per cent of the population), including 48 per cent with additional mobility needs, 1.2 million people who use a wheelchair (two thirds of which are regular users and one third who can walk, stand or move independently sometimes) and 2 million people who are blind. Studies also show that time in a garden can do wonders for our wellbeing and this can be especially important for those who need physical recuperation or a mental health boost. So, access for all, where possible, is crucial.

As a rule, pathways for wheelchairs should be a minimum 1.2m wide, a must if you’re creating a community space or need to accommodate a wheelchair at home. A pathway of 1.5m or more allows two people to walk side by side, next to a wheelchair or with a guide dog. For bigger gardens, take inspiration from the wide pathways of RBG Kew and RHS Wisley. For smaller gardens, wider sections of pathway can help. It isn’t always possible to make a garden completely flat but if a slope is necessary, aim for a recommended gradient of 1:20 for wheelchair users (1:12 with level landings every 5m). At Horatio’s Garden London & South East, great measures were taken to provide a flat surface without thresholds, where people using wheelchairs were able to come easily into the garden from their ward room to enjoy the space.

Surfaces should also be firm and slip resistant. There’s no perfect product on the market right now, so think about what works best for your needs and the environment you’re working in. Resin-bound gravel provides an unmatched smoothness but is expensive and not the most environmentally friendly choice. Bound gravel becomes loose after heavy traffic, while well-laid paving slabs can work but are less permeable to rainwater. Avoid bark chip paths and loose gravel, which are nearly impossible to navigate for most standard wheelchairs and anyone with extra mobility needs.

It’s also important to involve those who will be using the space from the design stage. Then, when it comes to creation, do a few test runs to see what may need adapting. On a recent *DIY SOS* build, a group of consultants with visual impairment commented on the usefulness of raised metal edging along pathways. I initially saw this as a trip hazard, but they said that it helped to mark where in the garden you are and prevented walking into planted borders. Raised edges can also help wheelchair users, while paths with gentle curves, rather than sharp angles, further aid navigation.

I’ve found that the more sensory and immersive a garden is, the greater the opportunity for reflection, connection and mindfulness. On one occasion, I brought a pot of scented pelargonium ‘Attar of Roses’ to a man whose high level of spinal injury meant that he could hardly move. He had to remain on a ward, so I used the sensory power of plants to bring the garden to him. Brushing a leaf on his hand and holding it up to his nose, I’ll never forget how he closed his eyes and inhaled, transported to another, more verdant, world. His mood definitely improved.

The way we look after spaces such as hospices, hospitals and community gardens is essential, with trained gardeners key to maintaining accessibility, enjoyment, a sense of welcome and engaging plant knowledge for those who want it: ‘Someone looks after this space for me to enjoy, so someone cares about me’. If you’re interested in such a role, horticultural therapy training can offer a rewarding career and an insightful addition to public gardening roles (see thrive.org.uk and trellisscotland.org.uk). There’s also funding available to help people with disabilities get back into gardening at home (see gardeningwithdisabilitiestrust.org.uk) or help create accessible gardens (ngs.org.uk).

So next time you’re laying a pathway, planting a border or buying plants, think about how your choices might embrace those who aren’t always put first. You never know who might be using your garden in the future, so let’s always try to create gardens that are accessible and uplifting to all.

> “Raised edges can help wheelchair users, while paths with gentle curves further aid navigation”

NEXT MONTH …
Can you start a new garden anywhere? It all begins with the soil, says Becky Searle

NEXT MONTH Get Ashley’s top tips for creating and maintaining a tropical-style garden in the August issue

PHOTO: PAUL DEBOIS

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WHAT TO DO NOW

50 things to do this month from the *Gardeners' World* team

This month!

56 Around the garden
61 Pruning
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67 Wildlife
69 Flowers
72 Back to basics
75 Fruit & veg
79 House plants

PHOTOS: NEIL HEPWORTH; JASON INGRAM

Use salvias to fill gaps

Plant some long-flowering salvias now to fill colour gaps in your borders. These shrubby salvias come in shades of purple, pink and red through to pale cream, so choose varieties that suit your colour scheme.

Select a sunny spot with enough room to dig the planting hole without disturbing surrounding plants. Water the salvia before planting to fully wet the rootball, and water the planting hole too. Firm the salvia in well, water again, then mulch the soil with garden compost. In a week or two they will have rooted out into the soil and will be more tolerant of dry conditions.

Salvias will help keep your borders in colour until the end of summer

30 MINUTES TO SPARE

Tidy up conifers now to reshape the plant and encourage thicker growth. They won't grow back from old wood so just trim back new growth, leaving some intact. Resist pruning conifer hedges until later in the summer, to avoid disturbing any nesting birds.

Most lawnmowers have a lever that adjusts blade height in stages

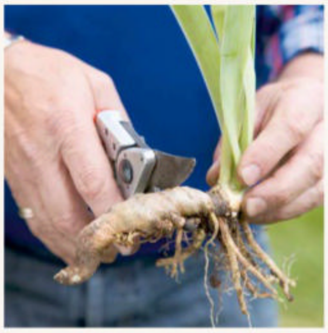
Raise your mower blades

Adjust the height of your mower blades to give your grass a slightly longer cut. This will help your lawn be more resilient and less stressed during hot weather. Taller grass encourages the development of long tap roots that will hold more water and nutrients, in turn giving the grass the strength to compete with weeds. A longer cut also reduces the risk of scalping your lawn, keeping it in good condition.

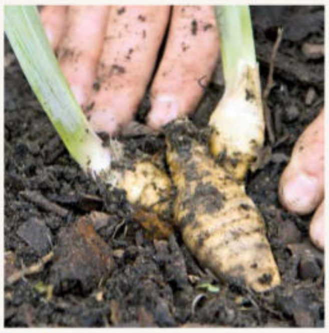
Find the lever or switch at the front of the mower that raises the front wheels from low to high in graduating stages. Try the mid range first and allow the grass to get a little longer than usual between cuts if it's still in growth.

STEP BY STEP
Divide bearded iris rhizomes

Split bearded irises that are flowering less. Do this every three or four years to keep them healthy and reduce congested clumps. Place the new rhizomes on the soil surface so they get the sun and ensure they have good drainage. Water divided plants to help them root in.



1 LIFT a rhizome and cut the unrooted end off to around 10cm. Trim back the whippy tops of the leaves so you have a 15cm fan of foliage.



2 LOOSEN the soil surface and press the rhizome back into the soil, leaving the top uncovered. The lower roots will anchor it back in.

3 EXPECT these divided rhizomes to establish and flower successfully next year. The bumper display will be on show the year after.

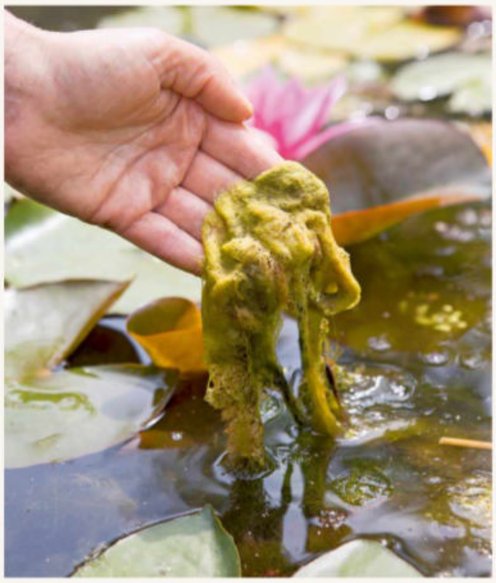
Drought-tolerant clover is great for attracting pollinating insects

Leave a clover patch

Allow clover to thrive in your garden. A clover-rich lawn is a magnet for pollinators such as butterflies, moths, beetles and honeybees. Red clover looks great in the borders too.

Clover will grow in most soils and in sun or shade. It makes an efficient blanket of foliage that helps the soil around it to retain moisture, and will allow earthworm populations to thrive and, in turn, improve the soil.

Nectar-rich flowers with worms beneath will attract birds and small mammals to feed on them. Clover fixes nitrogen so the neighbouring grasses will also do well.



You can pull out algae by hand or, for bigger quantities, use a net or rake

Remove algae from ponds

Keep on top of algae in the pond. This blanket weed is filamentous algae so, like the single-celled variety, will proliferate with warmth and excess nutrients. Pull it out.

You're unlikely to get it all out in one go, so add it to your list of regular jobs. The suspended algae that makes the pond water go green tends to bloom then fades, as long as there are plenty of other large plants in the pond competing for nutrients. Feed pond plants sparingly to reduce nutrient levels, and encourage snails and insects to feed on the algae.

Control thistles

Weed out prickly thistles that are causing a nuisance. Dig them out, getting as much of the root as possible. Creeping thistle is the worst culprit, as it grows vigorously and sends down deep roots that regrow when broken. Remove them before they flower as the seeds will spread the plant even further.

Sow thistles are mostly spread by seed but pull out easily with all the roots, so as long as you spot them before they flower they can be easily controlled. Some thistles, such as *Cirsium rivulare* 'Atropurpureum', can be grown as ornamentals because of their spectacular flowers.

Sow thistles spread by seed, so pull them out before they flower

DON'T FORGET

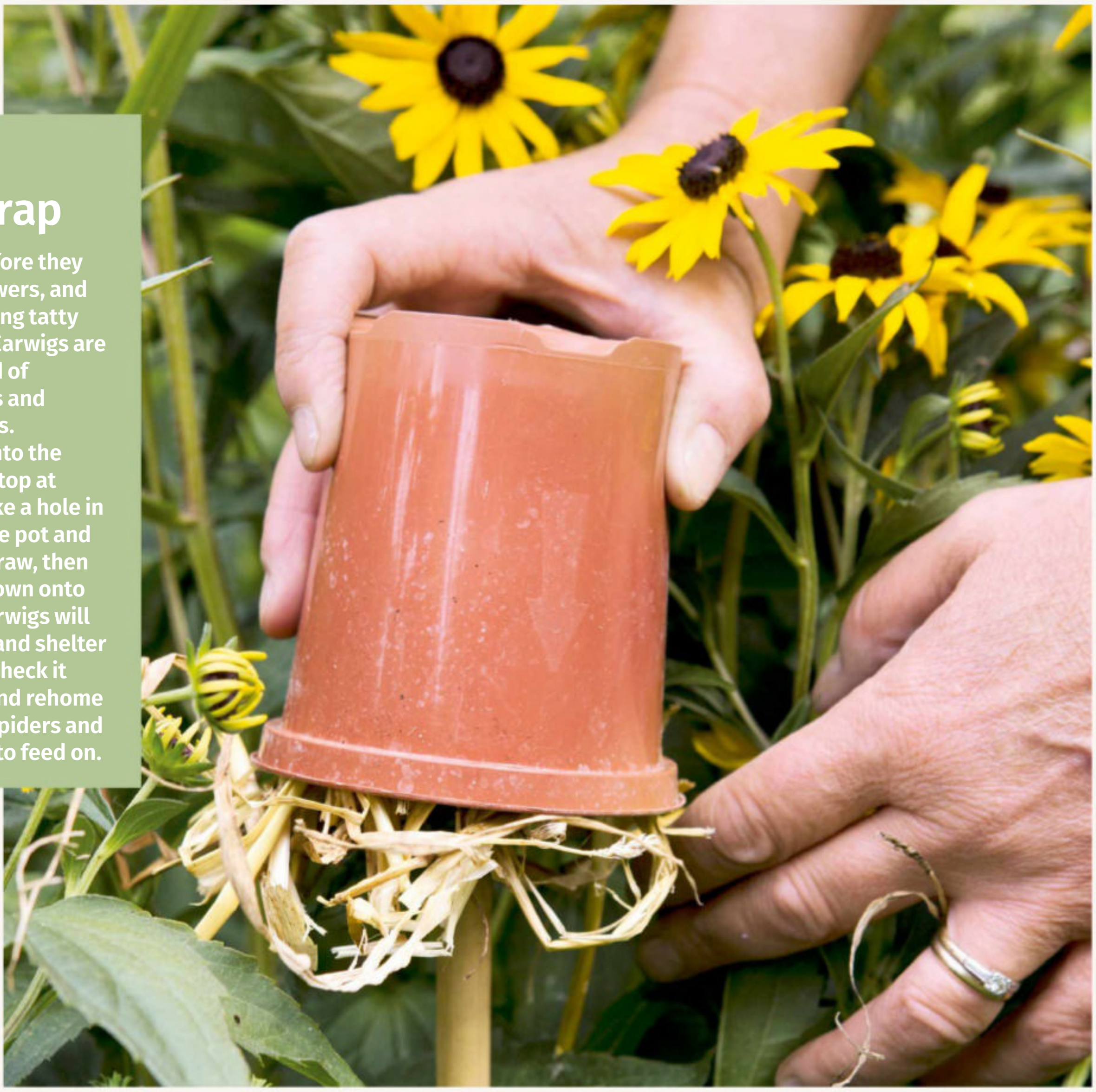
- ☐ **Prune reverted shoots out of variegated evergreens**
- ☐ **Propagate pinks (dianthus) by pegging down wounded shoots into the ground**
- ☐ **Remove unwanted shoots and suckers from tree trunks**
- ☐ **Water your compost heap in hot, dry spells**
- ☐ **Move pots to shade and water them well if you are going away**

WORDS: ROSIE YEOMANS PHOTOS: SARAH CUTTLE; NEIL HEPWORTH; JASON INGRAM; TIM SANDALL; JO WHITWORTH

Make an earwig trap

Trap earwigs before they feed on your flowers, and leave them looking tatty and disfigured. Earwigs are particularly fond of clematis, dahlias and chrysanthemums.

Press a cane into the ground with the top at flower level. Make a hole in the bottom of the pot and fill with damp straw, then push it upside down onto the cane. The earwigs will run up the cane and shelter in the straw, so check it every morning and rehome them for birds, spiders and small mammals to feed on.



Make your own earwig trap for free using materials you already have

Beechgrove

Beechgrove Garden

BEECHGROVE'S BACK

The new series is back on BBC Scotland and BBC TWO. Check TV listings for details.

An iron tonic will help boost the health of acid-loving plants

VIEW FROM BEECHGROVE

Feed acid-loving shrubs

There is a wide variety of ericaceous shrubs at Beechgrove, including a border specifically for azaleas, enkianthus and rhododendrons, along with blueberries, heathers and potted camellias. These all thrive in acidic soils, with a pH of between 4.5 and 6. Above that, the high calcium levels mean these plants cannot access or metabolise essential nutrients. Iron deficiency can be a sign of too much lime in the soil, with yellowing leaves indicating lime-induced chlorosis – this can be treated by applying a sequestered iron tonic.

DON'T FORGET

- ☐ Thin out spring-flowering biennials that were sown last month
- ☐ Remove any plant material infected with grey mould as soon as possible
- ☐ Make sure compost or soil is moist before feeding plants
- ☐ Summer prune apple trees, taking new growth back by two-thirds
- ☐ Keep on top of deadheading to encourage a longer flowering season

PHOTOS: SARAH CUTTLE; NEIL HEPWORTH; TIM SANDALL

Check the moisture levels of pots daily during hot weather

Keep containers well watered

Water pots regularly through the hottest months. Compost dries out very quickly in pots especially in summer, when there can be little rain and where plants form a canopy so that rain cannot reach the roots.

Use a watering can without a rose to direct water into the compost rather than over the foliage. Pour the water slowly, let it drain, then do it once more to allow the compost to soak right through.

Move pots into the shade to recover if they're wilting badly or if you're away for a few days.

Help ferns in pots take up nutrients with a seaweed feed

Feed potted ferns

Ferns are not big feeders but when grown in a pot they can soon run out of nutrients. However, depending on the feed you choose, they can regain strength and keep looking healthy.

Avoid lush foliar feeds, instead choosing a seaweed tonic that will bolster the plant's ability to use the nutrients it needs. Mix it with water in your watering can at the recommended dose and apply it to the compost surface when the compost is damp.

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"I really enjoyed building this set because there were lots of colourful pieces, and in the end, when it was complete, it looked beautiful. Some bits of it were trickier to build than others, but most of it was easy and not too hard. The balcony was probably trickiest, because I had to get it in place with the other pieces and it was hard to see all of them clearly. I didn't have any help and did it all myself!

"My favourite part was probably building the roof and the sunflowers, because these were the last bits, and once I finished, I was really happy.

"I would recommend it to my friends who enjoy LEGO sets and want a challenge, and I would definitely like to build more kits from this collection. Now I've built it, I'm going to put it on display with my other built LEGO sets."

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***Ashley Edwards** shows you what to prune in the garden this month*

Lightly prune magnolias in summer to avoid sap bleeding, which can weaken the plant

Give magnolias a light prune

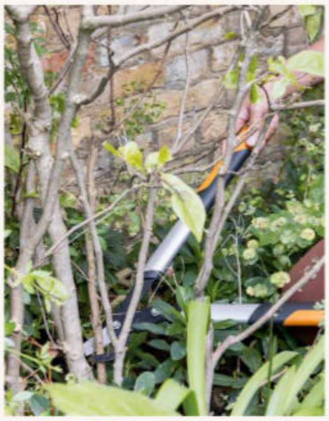
Magnolias are best left to grow naturally, as they tend to form attractive, layered structures without intervention. They rarely need major pruning – just the occasional removal of dead wood, crossing branches, or light shaping.

If pruning is needed, do it in summer to avoid sap bleeding, which won't kill the plant but can weaken it and invite disease. Magnolias can be trained against a wall or crown-lifted to create space beneath for underplanting.

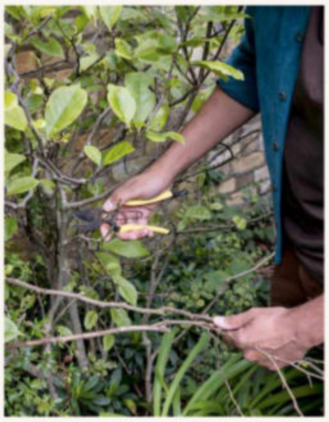
Magnolias don't respond well to heavy pruning, so if your magnolia is overgrown and needs rejuvenating, do this in phases, removing no more than a third of the old wood each year.

STEP BY STEP

Prune magnolias



1 USE clean, sharp loppers if branches are thicker than your finger to prevent tears and snags. Dead or diseased branches should be completely removed to the base of the trunk.



2 SHAPE your magnolia using secateurs to lightly trim back extended side shoots to a pair of leaves. This will encourage an even bushing out of the plant.

3 TRIM off any thin, spindly shoots at the base to improve the shape. These will often appear from the rootstock or if your magnolia is growing in the shade of another tree.

WORDS: ASHLEY EDWARDS. PHOTOS: PAUL DEBOIS

Cut hardy geraniums back to fresh growth to encourage a new flush of flowers through the summer

Cut back hardy geraniums

Hardy geraniums are a staple of the herbaceous border and are excellent for underplanting trees and shrubs or softening the edges of borders. By July the first flush of flowers may have ended and the plant can sometimes be looking tatty or overgrowing its space.

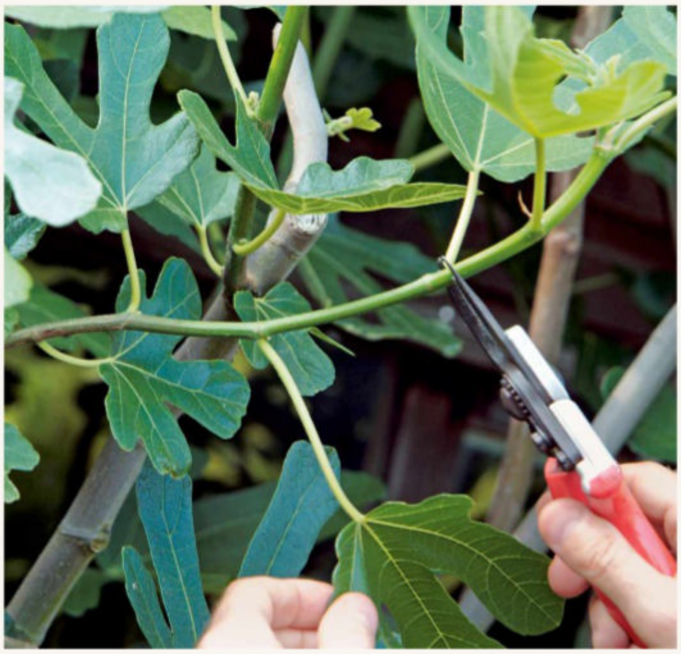
It's usually best to cut the whole plant back down to the new flush of growth, or back to the base if there aren't new leaves appearing. Water well and mulch with organic garden compost or feed with an organic liquid feed and you'll have a fresh flush of leaves along with flowers that will take you through to the end of summer.

Prune fig tips

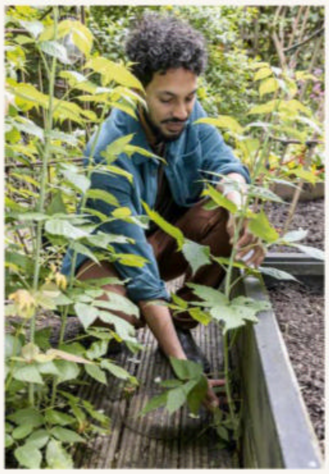
Figs are vigorous growers that can more than double in size in a year. If you have hard pruned your fig earlier in the year, then it will react with long leafy growth that can inhibit fruit production and block out light to neighbouring plants.

July is the best time to take out the tips of shoots, back to five or six leaves. This will allow light in to help ripen fruits, which are produced at the base of stems, and energy will be focused on producing fruits rather than extensive leafy growth.

Taking out tips also encourages a bushy plant with more fruiting side shoots. Any long stems or suckers that are in the wrong place can also be removed back to the base now.



Prune fig shoots back to allow light in and focus energy on fruiting



Raspberries produce shoots in all kinds of places so need checking

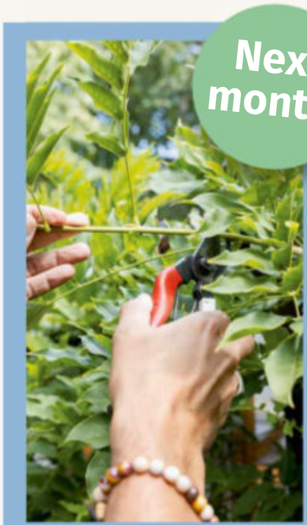
Remove shoots of wandering raspberries

Raspberries are suckering plants that can sometimes send shoots out where they aren't wanted. If left unchecked, you'll soon end up with a tangled patch of unproductive canes that can block out light and strangle other plants.

Before removing wandering canes, be conscious that autumn-fruiting raspberries produce fruits on this year's canes, while summer-fruiting canes produce fruit on last year's shoots. If you are removing a cane in July, it will likely be a fruiting cane.

If you want, you could transplant them next spring or give them to a friend or neighbour who wants to start their own raspberry patch.

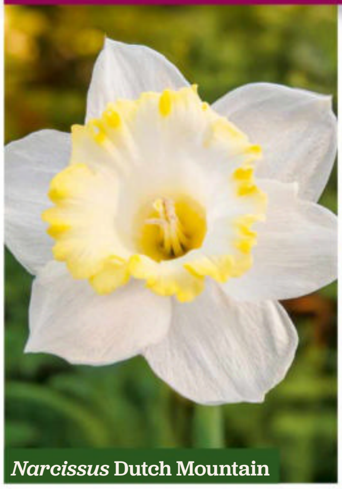
Next month!

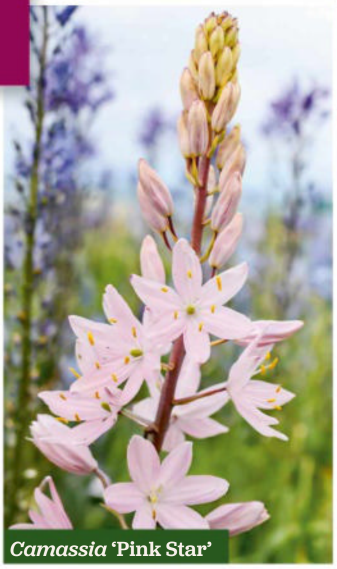


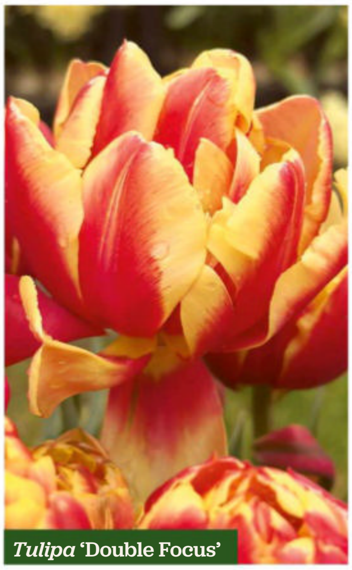
☐ Ashley shows you how to prune wisteria

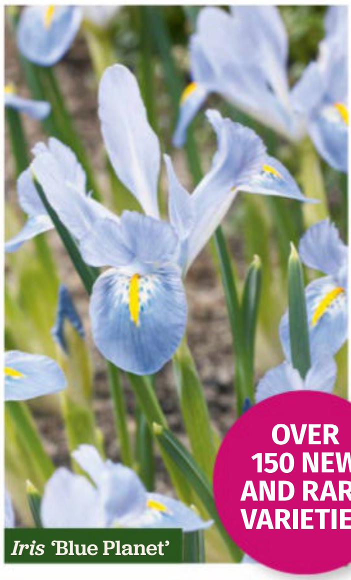
PHOTOS: SARAH CUTTLE; PAUL DEBOIS; TIM SANDALL

Gardeners' World offer


Narcissus Dutch Mountain


Camassia 'Pink Star'


Tulipa 'Double Focus'


Iris 'Blue Planet'

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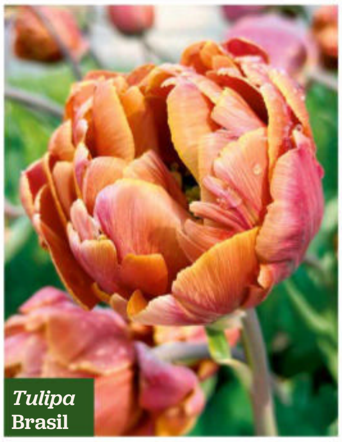
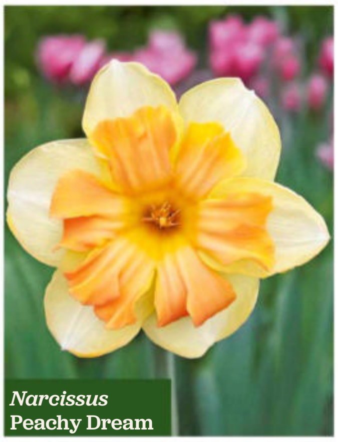
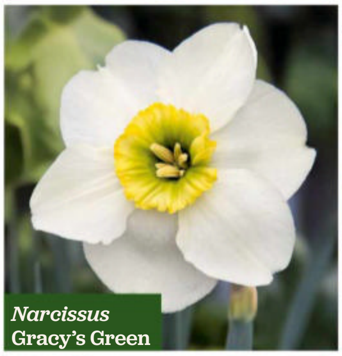
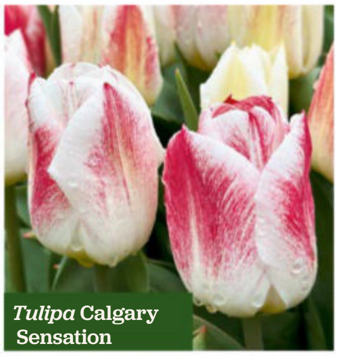
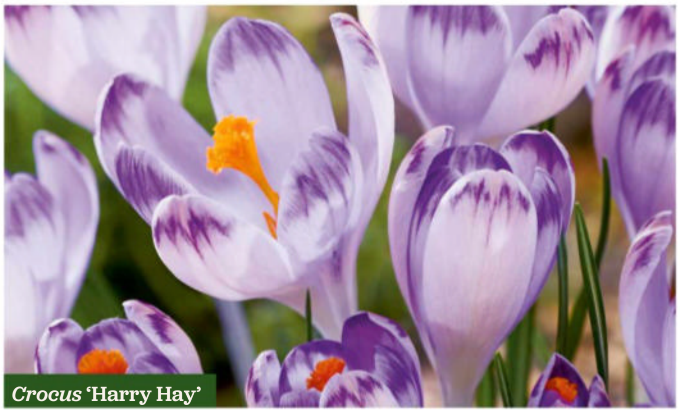

Tulipa Brasil


Narcissus Peachy Dream


Narcissus Gracy's Green


Tulipa Calgary Sensation


Crocus 'Harry Hay'

SAVE 15% ON NEW AND EXCLUSIVE SPRING BULBS

With last spring's displays still fresh in your mind, now's a great time to plan planting styles and combinations that inspired you or choose something beautiful to plug any gaps in the border.

Autumn planting brings anticipation to the months following summer and planning ahead is worth every moment. With the right combination of bulbs – and a 15% discount – you can enjoy continuous colour from autumn through to late spring next year.

■ ***Narcissus* Dutch Mountain**
Elegant champagne-white petals with a yellow rimmed corona.
Height x Spread 40cm x 15cm
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■ ***Camassia* 'Pink Star'**
Star-shaped, pale-pink florets contrast against green foliage.
H x S 70cm x 20cm **F** May-Jun
1 bulb ~~£12.90~~ **£10.97**

■ ***Tulipa* 'Double Focus'**
Red and yellow peony-like blooms on sturdy stems.
H x S 40cm x 15cm **F** Apr-May
10 bulbs ~~£8.90~~ **£7.57**

■ ***Iris* 'Blue Planet'**
Sky blue, with sunny-yellow marks. One of the first iris to appear in the year.
H x S 10cm x 5cm **F** Feb-Mar
10 bulbs ~~£4.90~~ **£4.17**

■ ***Tulipa* Brasil**
Fully double in a rich, earthy palette of copper, maroon and orange. Peony-flowering variety.
H x S 40cm x 15cm **F** Apr-May
5 bulbs ~~£9.75~~ **£8.29**

■ **NEW! *Narcissus* Peachy Dream** Ribbed, split corona in salmon pink and golden yellow.
H x S 40cm x 15cm **F** Apr-May
5 bulbs ~~£9.75~~ **£8.29**

■ **NEW! *Narcissus* Gracy's Green** Ivory-white petals with an unusual green corona.
H x S 40cm x 15cm **F** Apr-May
3 bulbs ~~£7.50~~ **£6.38**

■ ***Tulipa* Calgary Sensation**
Ivory-white petals streaked with reddish-pink flames.
H x S 40cm x 15cm **F** Apr-May
10 bulbs ~~£8.90~~ **£7.57**

■ ***Crocus* 'Harry Hay'**
Petals are uniquely marked with a deeper purple. New variety.
H x S 10cm x 5cm **F** Feb-Mar
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Make new coleus plants for free by taking cuttings – they'll root in quickly and easily

Take coleus cuttings now

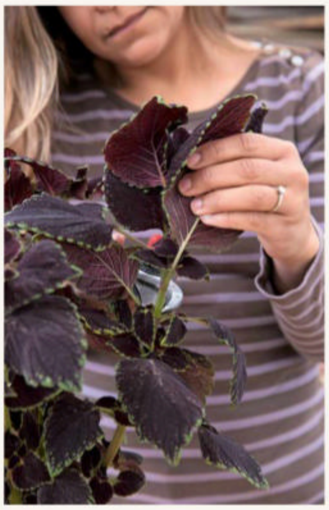
Coleus, with its colourful leaves, makes a great summer addition to containers and borders. And it's easy to make new plants to refresh your displays later this summer, as the soft stems root very easily. You can also overwinter your new plants in a greenhouse or on a sunny indoor windowsill for planting out next year.

Water the plant you're taking cuttings from an hour or two beforehand, then remove your selected shoots. Take care not to let them dry out – mist the leaves as you work to stop them wilting.

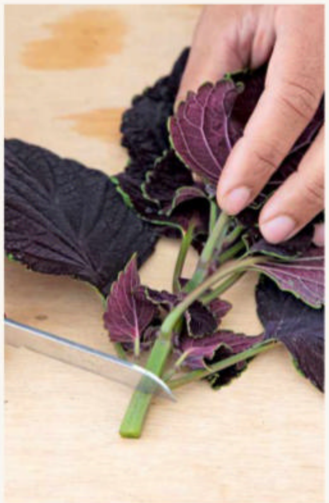
Once the cuttings have been firmed lightly into the pot, water well then place in a lidded propagator or cover with a polythene bag to maintain high humidity. But take them out of the bag daily for an hour to reduce the risk of fungal disease.

Coleus cuttings root quickly and will be growing away after about four weeks. Pot them on as they grow, then plant out for the last few weeks of summer warmth. To overwinter these tender plants, keep in a greenhouse then plant out in late spring.

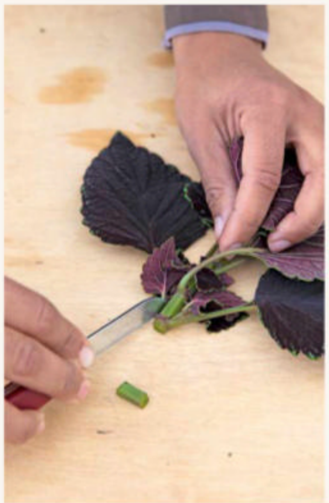
STEP BY STEP Taking coleus cuttings



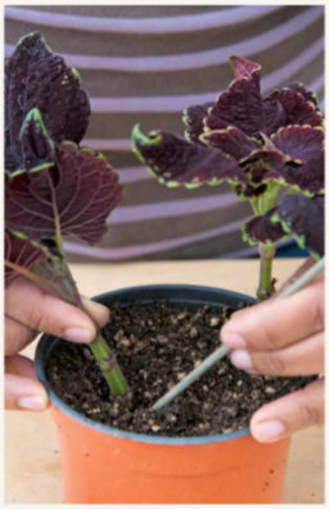
1 SELECT a strong shoot, 10-15cm long, with good leaf colour. Make your cut just above a leaf joint – new shoots will then grow to replace the loss.



2 START by trimming back the base of the stem to just below a leaf joint. Work quickly to avoid drying out, or mist and place in a plastic bag if there's any delay.



3 REMOVE the lower leaves, taking them off as close to the stem as possible with a sharp knife. Just keep two or three pairs of leaves at the top of the shoot.



4 FILL a pot with peat-free multi-purpose compost. Use a dibber to make a hole, then insert the cutting so the first set of leaves are just above the surface. Firm in.

WORDS: ROSIE YEOMANS PHOTOS: SARAH CUTTLE; JASON INGRAM

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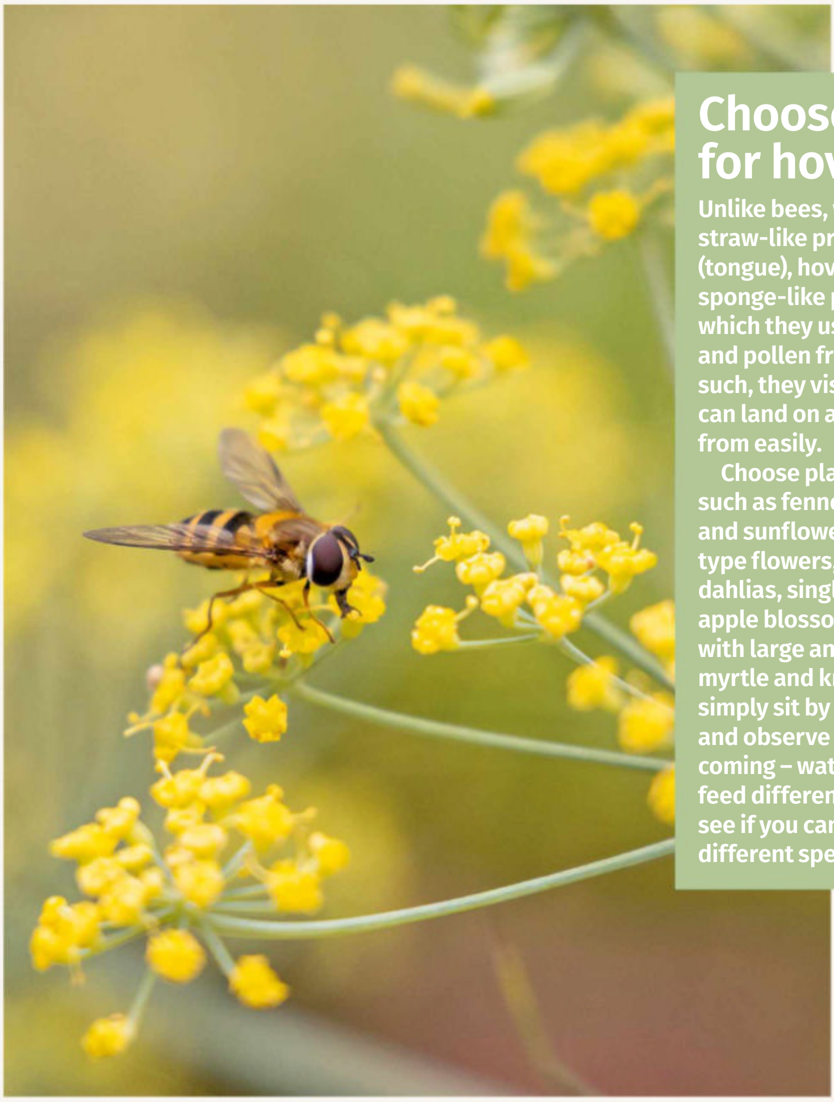
GWHY

Kate Bradbury*'s top tasks to do this month to make your garden more wildlife-friendly*



Choose plants for hoverflies

Unlike bees, which have a straw-like proboscis (tongue), hoverflies have a sponge-like proboscis, which they use to dab nectar and pollen from flowers. As such, they visit flowers they can land on and dab food from easily.

Choose plate-like flowers such as fennel, eupatorium and sunflowers; open, daisy-type flowers, such as single dahlias, single roses and apple blossom; and flowers with large anthers, including myrtle and knapweeds. Then simply sit by these flowers and observe the hoverflies coming – watch how they feed differently to bees and see if you can identify different species.

Hoverflies feed on fennel, which has plate-like flowerheads

Make a wasp hotel by drilling holes in a piece of wood

Drill holes in wood for wasps

Wasps get a bad press for being aggressive at summer picnics, but only two or three species behave like this – most are solitary and mind their own business. Wasps are carnivorous, unlike bees, so gather caterpillars, aphids, spiders and other invertebrates to feed their young – which can help control pests. Help them by making a wasp hotel. Drill holes in dead wood and place in a sunny spot. Make the holes 2-10mm in diameter and sand the wood to remove splinters, which can harm delicate wings.

DON'T FORGET

- ☐ Continue leaving areas of long grass so butterflies can lay eggs in it. Other species will use it, too
- ☐ Take part in the Big Butterfly Count, which starts on July 18
- ☐ Water flowering plants in dry weather so they continue producing nectar for pollinators
- ☐ Deadhead spent single-flowered roses to encourage more blooms, but leave others to develop hips
- ☐ Sow seeds of wildlife-friendly biennials, such as foxgloves and hollyhocks, for blooms next spring

30 MINUTES TO SPARE

In dry weather, water can be a lifeline. Fill bird baths with fresh daily and clean regularly to prevent a build-up of diseases. Add water at ground level and higher up. Use shallow dishes to accommodate baby hedgehogs, which often can't reach water in deeper dishes. Top ponds up with stored rainwater or leave tap water for 24 hours before using.

Hang your bat box in a sunny, sheltered spot, as high as possible

Make a box for bats to roost in

A bat box can provide a safe roosting habitat. Use rough-sawn timber 2cm thick and 20cm wide. Cut it into 4 lengths: 58cm, 30cm, 20cm, 15cm. Cut 2cm thick battens: 2 × 30cm and 2 × 20cm. Drill a hole near the top of the largest piece of wood. Leaving 10cm below the hole, nail the 30cm battens to either side, then nail the 30cm piece on top of the battens. Nail the 20cm battens on top of this, and then attach the 20cm piece of wood. Use the 15cm piece as a roof and add flashing to make it rainproof. Hang it high up on a wall.

PHOTOS: GETTY (EMFA16); PAUL DEBOIS; TIM SANDALL

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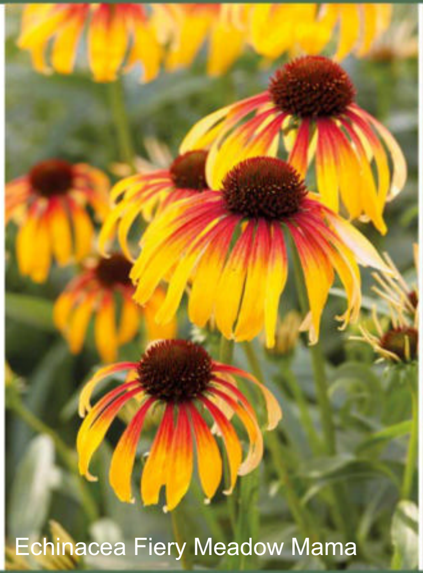
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Keep your annuals looking their best and blooming for longer by removing the fading flowers regularly

Deadhead your annuals

Spend some relaxing time in your garden, ideally every day, deadheading your annual flowers. It's a great opportunity for some gentle mindful reflection as you work. Deadheading also tidies up the flower displays, freshens the growth and stimulates more flowers to form. It prevents the plants from going to seed too. Simply snip off the spent blooms and add them to the compost bin.

Deadheading also gets you closer to your plants so you can enjoy and monitor their progress. Although at the same time you may spot other issues that need to be added to your list of tasks!

Scatter foxglove seeds on the compost surface and leave uncovered

Sow foxgloves

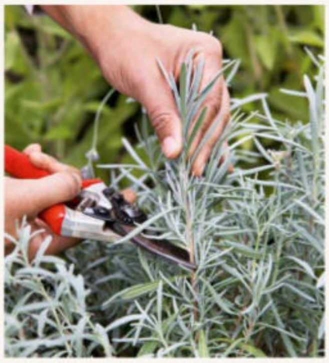
Collect and sow seeds from biennial foxgloves once the pods dry out. Fill a pot with peat-free seed compost, firm it gently and water well. Sprinkle the fine seeds over the surface and leave uncovered, as they need light and natural warmth to germinate.

Sowing in pots means you can plant the new foxgloves where you want them to flower, once they're ready to plant out in autumn. If you leave the seeds to scatter naturally, new plants will pop up around the garden, although they can easily be moved in autumn if necessary.

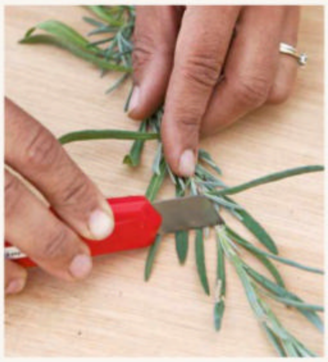
STEP BY STEP

Take lavender cuttings

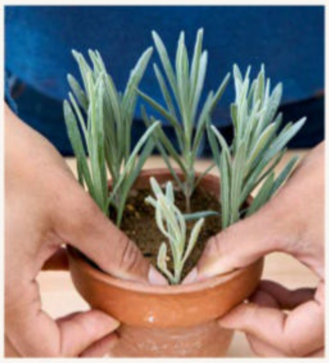
Now is a good time to take lavender cuttings, as there are plenty of non-flowering shoots. These are semi-ripe cuttings, with a bit of woodiness at the base. Keep them in a coldframe or a sheltered spot outdoors, only watering occasionally if the compost dries out.



1 CHOOSE a strong healthy shoot, then feel down the stem and cut at least 1cm below where the stem gets more rigid.



2 TRIM the cutting at the base below a leaf, so it's about 10cm long. Then remove the lower leaves and the soft tip.



3 FILL a terracotta pot with free-draining peat-free compost. Insert cuttings around the edge, firm in and water well.

WORDS: ROSIE YEOMANS. PHOTOS: SARAH CUTTLE; JASON INGRAM; TIM SANDALL

Give nicotianas a sheltered position in sun or light shade

Plant nicotianas

Add more fragrance to your garden with some nicotianas. Find gaps in borders or containers that are near paths, doors or patios, where you can enjoy the scent as you pass. The fragrance is at its strongest in the evening and lingers best in a sheltered spot where the air is still.

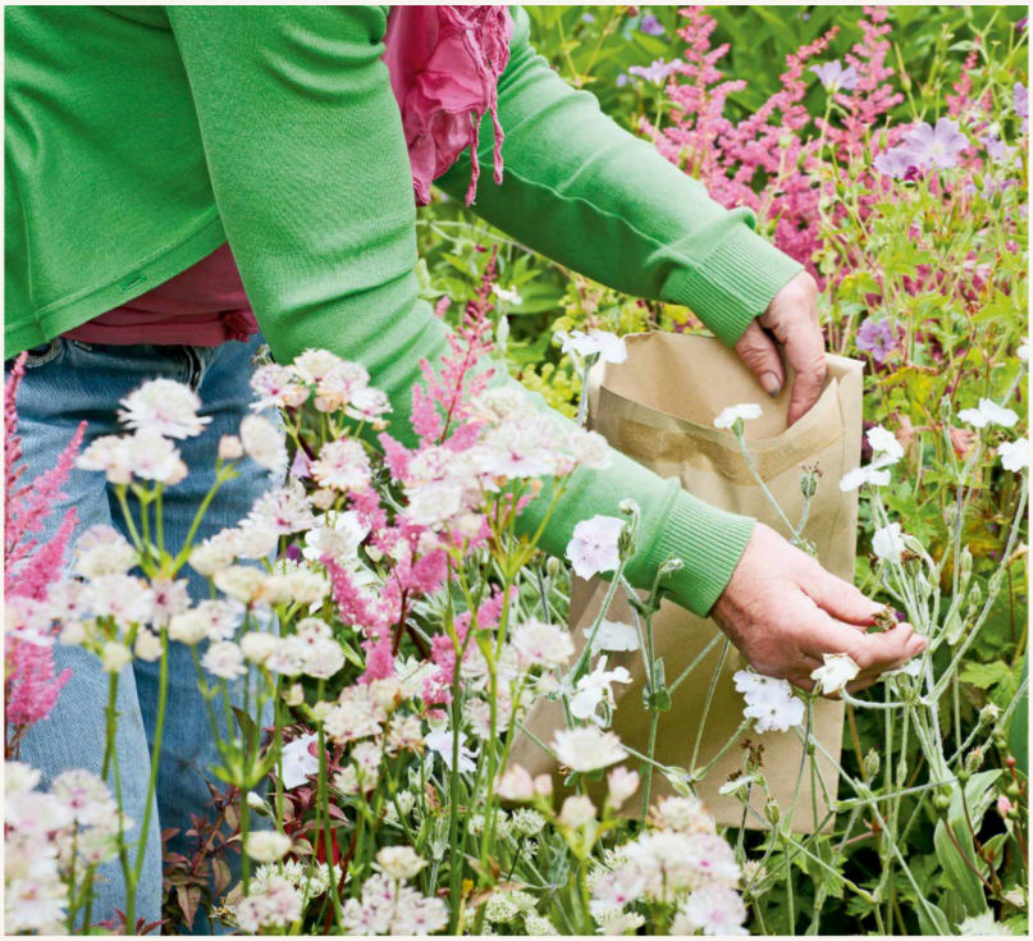
Water the plant beforehand, then dig a hole so the plant is positioned at the same level it was in the pot. Firm it in and water well, then continue watering for a few weeks until it has rooted out into the soil.

Deadhead French marigolds and protect them from slugs

Freshen up French marigolds

Give French marigolds a bit of a tidy, to keep them flowering right through the summer. Remove any spent flowers that can spoil the display, along with any fading leaves. Then check around the base for slugs and snails, which love to feed on marigolds.

Touching the leaves also releases a strong spicy scent, which deters whitefly from the surrounding plants, helping with damage control in the garden.

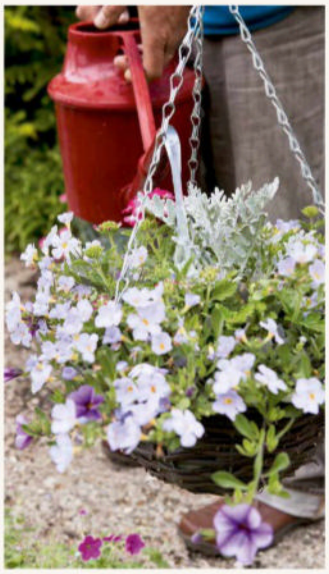


Place dry seed pods in a paper bag or envelope, and label it clearly so you know what the seeds are

Collect your own flower seeds

When the weather is warm and dry, it's a good time to collect seeds from plants that flowered earlier this year – look for seed capsules that have dried enough to release their ripe seeds. Late-spring and early-summer flowers, such as foxgloves, brunnera, campions, pulmonarias and trollius, are good candidates. Some later flowers may also be ready, including astrantias and alchemilla. Many bulbs grow well from seed too, so check the pods on camassias, chionodoxas and early varieties of alliums.

Snip off the seed capsules and put into labelled paper bags, then place in a dry, airy location out of direct sunlight. The seeds will drop into the bottom of the bag.



Apply liquid feed once a week to keep baskets flowering well

Look after hanging baskets

Get the best out of your hanging baskets by keeping them well watered when it's hot. As they usually contain lots of plants but much less compost than deep containers, they dry out more quickly. If the compost feels dry, water once, then go back a few minutes later to soak the compost right through. Also add a high potash liquid feed to the water once a week to boost flowering.

To make watering easier, you can put hanging baskets on a pulley so you can lower them down. And in very hot spells, move baskets temporarily into the shade to reduce the need for water.

DON'T FORGET

- ☐ **Prune rambling roses after flowering to remove any dead, damaged or diseased stems**
- ☐ **Plant autumn bulbs such as nerines and crinums**
- ☐ **Dry everlasting flowers by hanging them upside down in a cool dark place**
- ☐ **Cut oriental poppies down to ground level once they finish flowering to get a new flush of fresh foliage**

WORDS: ROSIE YEOMANS. PHOTOS: JONATHAN BUCKLEY; SARAH CUTTLE; PAUL DEBOIS

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For future strawberry harvests, root in the runners produced by established plants

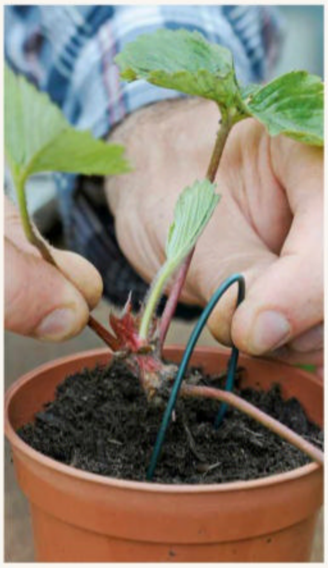
Pot up new strawberries

Mature strawberry plants send out horizontal stems (or stolons) with new plantlets at the end, known as runners. While it's best to weed these out of a productive bed to avoid overcrowding, they can also be a useful free source of new plants.

Strawberry beds become less productive after three or four years and need replanting. But new plants take a year to settle in and start fruiting. So if you get them ready in advance, you can have a seamless transition. But make sure the plantlets are just pegged to the surface, as the crown will rot if buried. Also take care to label the new plants if you have several varieties.

Once the plantlets are well rooted in, separate them from the parent plant and transplant into a new strawberry bed, either in early autumn or the following spring.

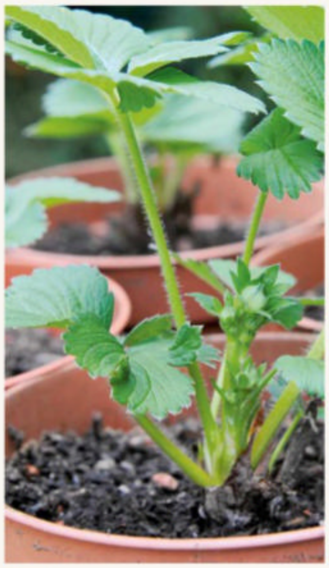
STEP BY STEP Rooting strawberry runners



1 CHOOSE a vigorous runner that hasn't rooted into the ground yet. Fill a small pot with peat-free multi-purpose compost, then use a U-shaped piece of wire to hold the plantlet on the surface.

2 TRIM away any tatty leaves so that all that's left is a healthy crown with several leaves, along with the main running stem that connects the parent plant to its offspring.

3 WATER the new plantlet to settle it in, and continue watering regularly if the weather is dry, to encourage it to root in well. Once firmly rooted, cut the stem to separate it from the parent plant.



4 PLACE the pot in a warm, bright spot, and the new plant should produce a strong rosette of leaves. If flower buds form this year, snip them off so all the plant's energy goes into getting established.

PHOTOS: NEIL HEPWORTH; TIM SANDALL

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STEP BY STEP Repot a Swiss cheese plant

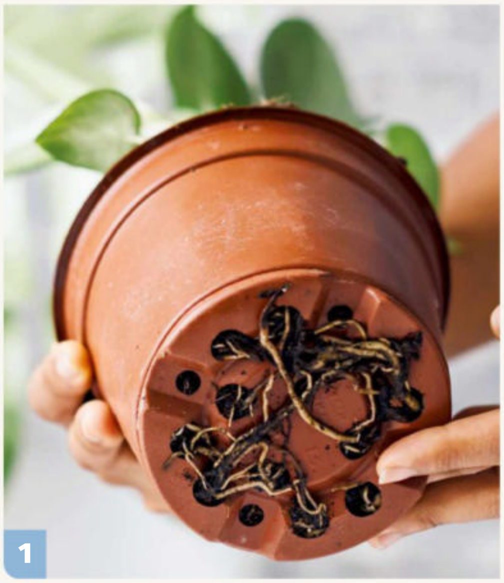
These vigorous plants can quickly outgrown their pot. When this happens, it will need watering more often and can easily topple over once the leafy canopy weighs more than the pot. Water the plant before you repot it, and choose a fibrous peat-free potting compost so there is plenty of air for the roots to thrive. Don't firm it down – a light tap of the pot is enough.

1 LOOK at your plant and if it's out of balance with the pot, check the roots. Support the plant with one hand while you turn the pot upside down. If roots are visible through the holes, it's time to repot.

2 PULL the pot carefully off the roots. Gently loosen out the roots so they are no longer circling around the base, but try to keep most of the compost around the rootball intact.

3 CHOOSE a pot that is 10-15cm wider than the last one. Put some peat-free potting compost in the base, then hold the plant in the centre of the pot with one hand while filling around the rootball with the other.

4 WATER to settle it in, then place in a position out of direct sun. This plant naturally grows in forests, so prefers low or dappled light. Use a cane or moss pole to support the new growth as it roots out into the fresh compost.



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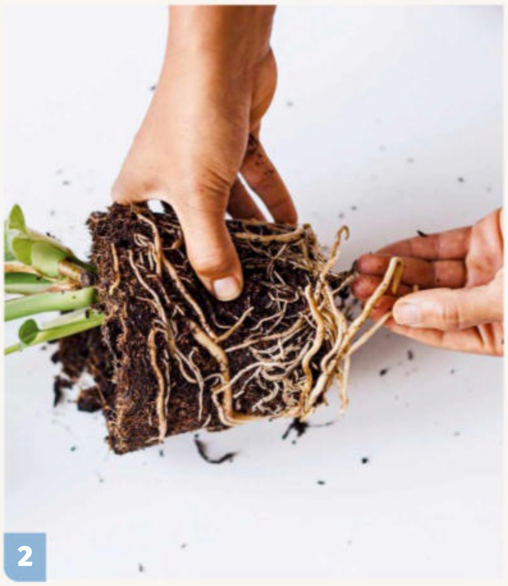

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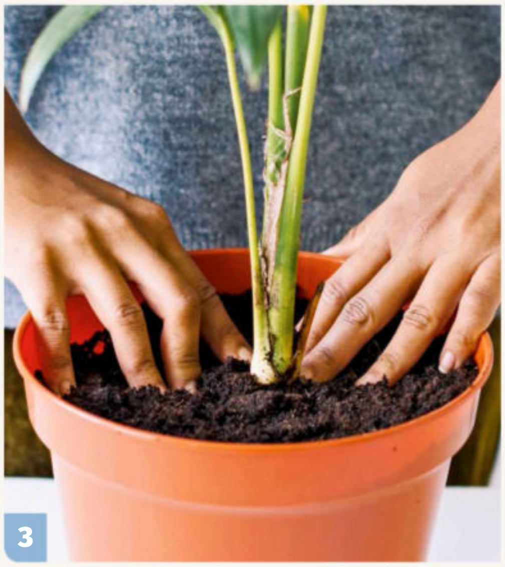

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4

Mist air plants regularly to avoid dehydration, especially in summer

Mist air plants

Air plants thrive with no soil around the roots, so their only source of moisture is humid air. However, in most homes the air is quite dry, so misting regularly is essential.

Fill a hand sprayer with water – ideally use rainwater if you're in a hard-water area, to avoid limescale marks on the foliage. Then leave the sprayer for a few hours before misting, to let the water get to room temperature.

Move the air away from furniture and electrical fittings before spraying – perhaps putting them in a sink or bath. If any of the plants look dry and brittle, spraying daily should soon revive them.

DON'T FORGET

- ☐ **Wipe dust off leaves with a damp cloth – start at the top of the plant and work downwards**
- ☐ **Feed your plants once a week with a liquid house plant fertiliser**
- ☐ **Water plants using water at room temperature and use water from a butt for orchids and carnivorous plants**
- ☐ **Take leaf cuttings from begonias and sanseverias**

WORDS: ROSIE YEOMANS. PHOTOS: SARAH CUTTLE; JASON INGRAM

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Harvest young beetroots

Beetroots are delicious when young and tender. Look under the leaves to check the root size – ideally, you want to harvest when they're the size of a golf ball or a little bigger. This may mean just taking selected plants from the row and leaving others between them to grow a bit more.

To stop undersized roots being pulled out with their neighbours, press one hand on the surrounding soil to hold them in place while you pull out your chosen roots. Water the row after harvesting to settle the remaining plants back in.

Wash the harvested roots and keep the young leaves to eat in salads.

For the best flavour and texture, pick beetroots at golf-ball size

DON'T FORGET

- ☐ Check beans daily to see if they are ready for harvesting
- ☐ Water fruit trees and bushes planted within the last year
- ☐ Pick the fresh shoots of herbs for drying or freezing
- ☐ Harvest garlic when the leaves turn yellow
- ☐ Keep hoeing between crops and remove the weeds to stop them re-rooting

Harvest sugar snaps as soon as the pods start to plump up

Pick pea crops

Harvest your peas by holding the brittle stems and pulling the pods off by hand. The ideal time to pick depends on the type of pea you are growing.

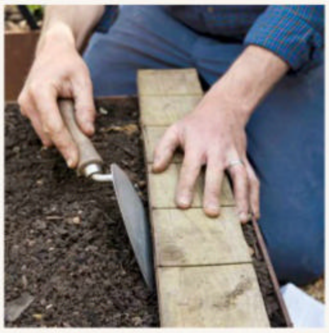
With mangetout and sugar snap peas, harvest when the pod is fully developed but before the peas have swelled too much. If you leave them too long, the pod becomes a bit stringy and less pleasant to eat.

With traditional peas, open a few pods to check if the peas have swelled enough. Younger peas are sweeter but smaller, so leave the pods a bit longer if you prefer bigger peas.

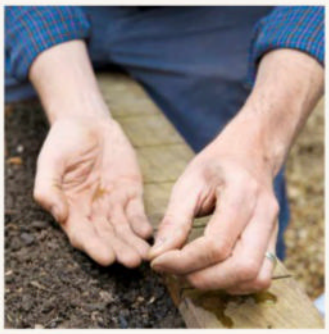
STEP BY STEP

Sow rocket

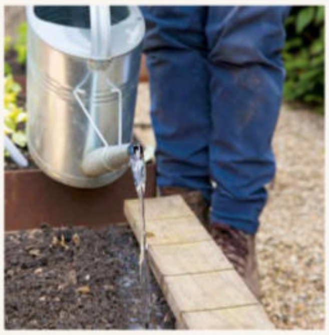
Now that the soil is warm, rocket seeds will germinate quickly. This salad is ideal for any temporary gaps between harvesting and sowing longer-term crops. You can pick it within five to six weeks and eat the thinnings too. If you have room to leave it for longer, just pick the outer leaves and it will crop well into autumn.



1 USE a straight edge to draw out a 2cm-deep drill into weed-free, raked soil. Water along the bottom of the drill to prepare it for sowing.



2 SOW seeds along the drill, ideally spacing them 3-4cm apart. Pull soil over the seeds, covering by 1cm, and lightly tamp down so the seeded line is lower.



3 WATER along the row – the lower level will help to keep the water in place. Continue watering regularly when the plants are growing to deter flea beetles.

WORDS: ROSIE YEOMANS. PHOTOS: SARAH CUTTLE; JASON INGRAM; TIM SANDALL

Plant winter cabbages

Move young winter cabbages into their final growing site now, so they have time to settle in and heart up before growth slows in autumn. If you haven't grown any yourself, plug plants are readily available.

Water the young plants well, then choose a sunny site with firm soil. Plant them 50cm apart, burying the stem right up to the first set of leaves, then firm in and water again. Cover with fine-mesh netting, supported on canes or hoops, to protect from cabbage white butterflies and pigeons.

Space winter cabbages 50cm apart, as they grow quite large

Harvest ripe gooseberries

Gooseberry crops generally ripen over a few weeks, so check the fruit regularly to get them at their best. Only pick fruits that are fully coloured and give a little when gently pressed. You could also taste one or two to check for sweetness.

Put them carefully into a shallow container – avoid layering the fruits deeply as they may bruise. Discard any that are overripe or damaged and beginning to rot. Most gooseberry plants are thorny, so take care when harvesting.

Give berries a gentle squeeze – they'll give slightly when ripe

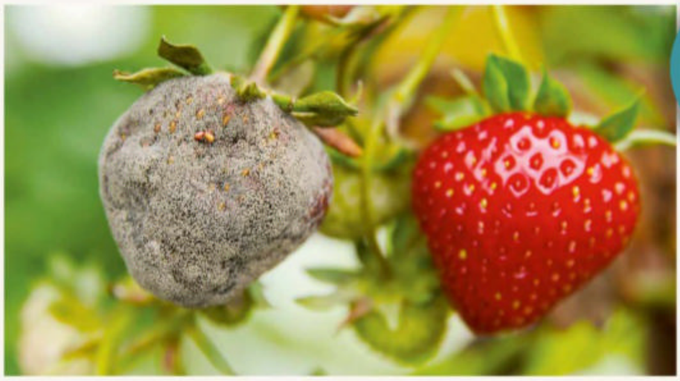
PHOTOS: SARAH CUTTLE; TIM SANDALL

Reduce the number of fruitlets to just one or two per cluster to get bigger and better apples overall

Start thinning out your apples

Reducing the number of developing apples will improve the size and quality of your crop. Apple trees naturally shed excess fruitlets in June, but it's worth removing more, ideally leaving just one or two per cluster. A large crop can overstress a tree, particularly if it's young.

First pick off any damaged and misshaped fruits that you can reach. Then chose which to keep, ensuring they're well spaced and in the best position to get lots of light for ripening. Collect up the removed fruitlets and compost them.



Remove mouldy fruits, so spores don't spread to the rest of the crop

Look after your strawberries

When harvesting your strawberry crop, take time to check over the plants carefully too. In particular, look for grey mould, which can take hold of fruits that are damaged by slugs, pecked by birds through the netting or just sitting on damp soil. Remove mouldy berries straight away to help prevent the infection spreading, and if you spot any damaged fruits, pick them off too and discard before mould sets in.

You can add mouldy fruit to your compost heap if it gets hot enough to kill the spores, but if not, put them in your green waste bin.

Next month!

- ☐ Sow green manures in empty patches
- ☐ Mow wildflower meadows
- ☐ Check for blight on tomatoes and potatoes
- ☐ Stake dahlias to support their blooms

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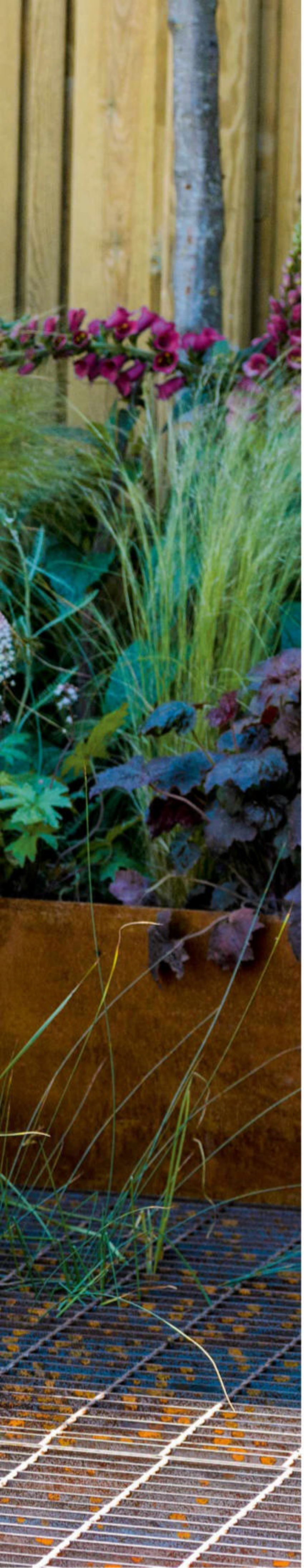
> “From capturing rain to choosing resilient plants, every small step helps – and as gardeners have always worked with the seasons, now, more than ever, we need to work with water too”

PHOTO: JASON INGRAM



Every DROP counts

With droughts and deluges becoming the norm, rethinking how we store, manage and reuse water is vital. The latest innovative solutions are all about going with the flow, says landscape designer **Darryl Moore**

Water is essential to healthy ecosystems, and every gardener knows how tricky it can be to get just the right amount. But with water becoming more unpredictable, it's time to be more mindful of how we use it in our gardens. By understanding where water comes from, how it moves and where it goes, we can work with the natural flow and reduce our reliance on mains water.

Although about 70 per cent of the Earth's surface is covered in water, only a small fraction of it is usable fresh water. It's often only during floods or droughts that we're reminded of how much we depend on water – and how vulnerable we are when it's in short supply.

Climate change is making things harder. Warmer air holds more moisture, leading to intense, erratic rainfall. At the same time, heatwaves and droughts are becoming more frequent. Here in the UK, we're seeing both. That means it's time to adapt our gardens – and the way we think about water.

In the wider landscape, the approach to water is shifting. Instead of channeling and controlling it, we're learning to let it find its own way. Author Erica Gies, a proponent of the slow water movement, puts it simply: "Collaborating with water, rather than trying to control it, can solve many of the problems we're creating for ourselves."

Darryl Moore is a landscape designer and author of *Gardening in a Changing World: Plants, People and the Climate Crisis*

FACT

GOING TO EXTREMES The Met Office forecasts that by 2070, UK winters will be up to 30 per cent wetter and summers up to 60 per cent drier

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FACT

■ WHY WATER MATTERS

In a 2024 WaterAid survey, four out of five gardeners said that hotter summers and prolonged heavy rainfall were affecting their garden, plants and homegrown produce

One inspiring example is the concept of 'sponge cities'. These urban areas use green spaces, wetlands and permeable surfaces to soak up and store water, ready for drier spells. The concept originated in Hyderabad, India, and China has since led the way, retrofitting selected cities, with the goal that 80 per cent of all land can absorb or reuse 70 per cent of storm water. This concept is now being considered for UK cities such as London, where flash flooding is on the rise.

Closer to home, UK councils are adopting Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) to deal with runoff from hard surfaces in urban areas. These mimic natural drainage by directing water into planted areas – bioswales and rain gardens – where it can soak in or be dispersed gradually. Sheffield's Grey to Green project, designed by Nigel Dunnett and Zac Tudor, has become a landmark in this approach, combining practical flood defences with beautiful, biodiverse planting. In Mansfield, a similar project managed by The Green Estate CIC is turning former areas of mown grass into colourful meadows that slow water and support wildlife.

Owen Hayman, Horticulture Innovation Manager at The Green Estate, says, "The scheme slows the flow of water on the hills around Mansfield, protecting low-lying areas from flooding and pollution, and brings beauty and biodiversity into neighbourhoods across the town. Areas that were mown grass are now diverse meadows with over 30 plant species, appropriate for both dry banks and moister areas."

Many of these ideas can also be implemented on a smaller scale at home. The Government has recommended such schemes be mandatory for most new buildings in England (legislation pending), so seek advice if you're building something from scratch. "Landscape architects can integrate functional aspects such as good water-management practice into any site, including adding quality sustainable drainage networks, which are resilient, easier to manage and beautiful at the same time," says Carolin Göhler, President of the Landscape Institute.

In Qian'an, in northern China's Hebei Province, the 'sponge city' concept has been used to divert heavy rainfall into a lake to reduce urban flooding

RIGHT In Mansfield, mown grass has been turned into meadows, which absorb more water and reduce runoff

PHOTOS: ALAMY/XINHUA; OWEN HAYMAN

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Clear Lake, a newly created feature at the RHS Garden Wisley, captures and stores rainfall, helping to reduce the use of mains water to irrigate the garden's key plant collections

The WaterAid Garden at RHS Chelsea in 2024 focused on sustainable water use, with a rainwater-harvesting pavilion and permeable raised decking

The RHS, meanwhile, is aiming for water neutrality by 2030, to help cope with drought and floods across all their gardens and plant collections. That means capturing and storing more rainwater, reducing the use of treated water, and designing landscapes that hold onto moisture. Clear Lake at the RHS Garden Wisley and the Leat at RHS Rosemoor are two examples of longer-term rainwater storage. Malcolm Anderson, RHS Head of Sustainability, says: "We must factor in expected changes to the seasonality of rainfall and the timing of landscape water use... We need to be sure our available water supplies are enough to rehydrate the landscape at the right time."

Nurseries are following suit, building their own reservoirs, and designers are using flower shows to share ideas. At RHS Chelsea in 2024, Tom Massey's WaterAid Garden demonstrated how to harvest rainwater and keep gardens thriving in dry times. "Water-wise gardening is about working with nature, not against it," Tom says. "Improving soil health so it acts like a sponge, harvesting rainwater wherever possible and making every drop count."

At this year's BBC Gardeners' World Live, Rachel Bailey's garden Where There's Water, There's Life shows how to reduce runoff, retain moisture and support wildlife using rain gardens, ponds and green roofs. "A raised walkway allows people to access the garden even when it's wet," says Rachel.

From capturing rain to choosing resilient plants, every small step helps – and as gardeners have always worked with the seasons, now, more than ever, we need to work with water too.

FACT

■ SOAK IT UP

According to the RHS, soil-based rain gardens can absorb 30 per cent more water than a lawn and reduce erosion by slowing heavy rainfall, as well as providing food and habitats for insects and birds

Wise up to water

From soakaways to SuDs, these public-realm solutions show us what we can do in our own gardens too.

■ Bioswale

A shallow, vegetated channel that slows and filters rainwater runoff, helping it soak into the ground and reduce flooding.

■ Rain garden

A planted dip in the ground that collects and absorbs rainwater runoff from roofs, patios or driveways.

■ Sponge city

An urban-planning concept where cities absorb rainwater like a sponge, using features such as green spaces, wetlands and permeable surfaces.

■ SuDS

Sustainable Drainage Systems help to manage rainwater naturally using swales, ponds, permeable surfaces and soakaways.

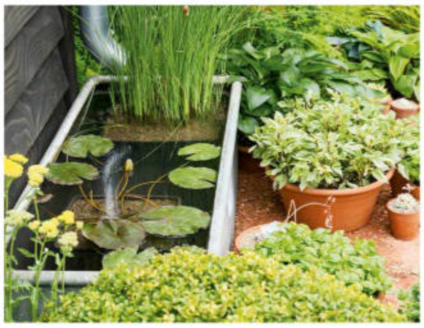
PHOTOS: RHS/OLIVER DIXON

5 ways to work with water

Join the slow water movement by being water wise in your garden – every little bit helps

1 Start with rain

Understanding where water enters and exits our gardens, as well as how best to use it, is crucial. Treat rainwater as your garden's main water source. Keep surfaces permeable, so rain can soak in rather than running off. Install water butts or tanks to capture water from roofs. Water early or late in the day, at the base of plants, to help retain moisture and provide extra humidity. If additional watering is needed in dry spells, use harvested rainwater or grey water from washing indoors.



2 Be resilient

Put plants where they'll naturally thrive without additional watering. Drought-tolerant UK and European plants should cope with both dry and wet spells. Improve soil drainage using recycled materials such as sand or crushed concrete.

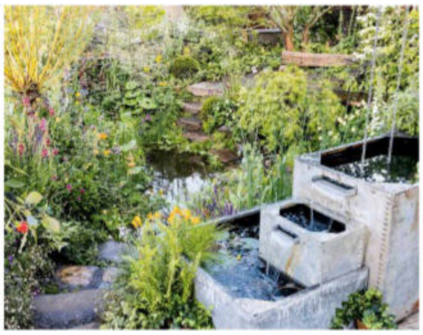
New plants need water to get established, so plant in autumn to give roots time to settle in before the growing season in spring. Let thirsty lawns go brown in dry spells – this is part of grass's survival technique, and the lawn will soon green up once it rains again.

3 Add a pond

A pond holds water in your garden and supports wildlife. If you've got the space, you could even make a natural swimming pool with up to half of the surface area planted and kept clean using water circulated through gravel and plants. Garden designer and natural pool creator Will Tomson says: "There is no greater joy than swimming alongside newts, while dragonflies pass overhead." Even a small pond promotes garden biodiversity and helps to regulate the microclimate.

4 Divert the flow

Simple ideas can make a big difference. Garden consultant Wendy Allen specialises in solutions for capturing and moving water around the garden to where it's needed: "Cover an outside table with a waterproof cover and place a chain or a stick across it to help divert water into a can or bucket. Use downpipe diverters from roof guttering to channel rainwater into a water butt or large tank that can store up to 1,000 litres of water. These can be bought new or second hand."



5 Feed the soil

Soil that is rich in organic matter has a spongy texture. It holds onto moisture and releases it slowly. Mulching the soil surface with garden compost, planting densely and reducing bare soil all help too. This is especially important in hotter, drier summers, but also when there are deluges that need soaking up. The increased pore spaces also provide good aeration, which is essential for healthy root growth and leads to more robust, stronger plants.

FACT

■ TURN OFF THE TAP The 2021 Environment Act aims to reduce the use of public water supply per person by 20 per cent by 2038. Using rain rather than mains water is something you can do today

Listen to the Gardeners' World Summer Conversations podcast to hear Dr Amanda Rasmussen, author of *RHS What to Grow for a Climate Resilient Garden*, share more **water-saving tips**.

PHOTOS: SARAH CUTTLE; PAUL DEBOIS; NEIL HEPWORTH; JASON INGRAM

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PHOTO: SARAH CUTTLE

GREEN HOUSE GROWING

With summer in full swing you might think the greenhouse has fulfilled its purpose, but there is still lots to be done, says **Alan**

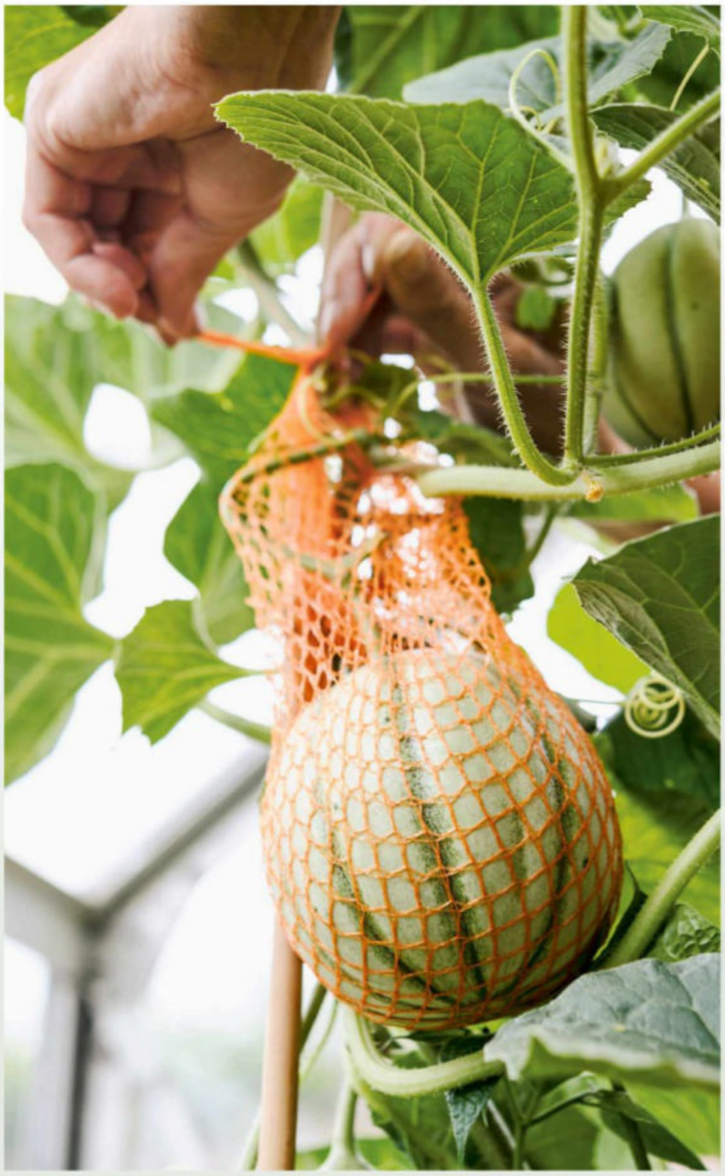
Summer! The time of year when the greenhouse has accomplished most of its work, up to a point. But the great thing about your miniature Crystal Palace right now is that it can become a pleasure dome.

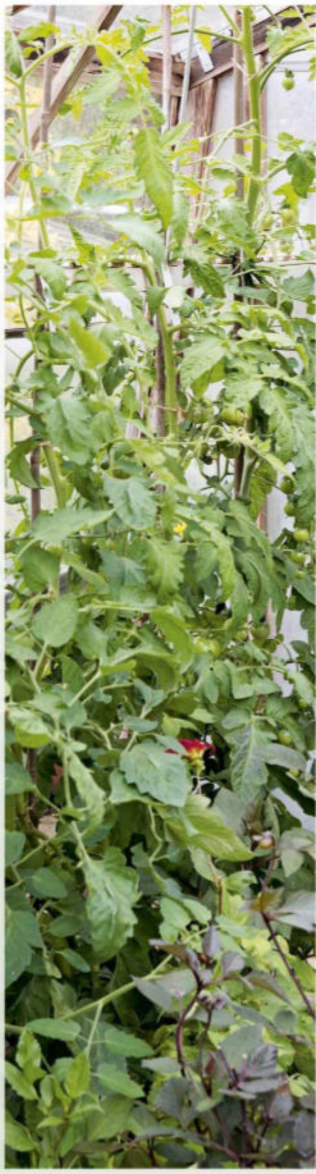
During spring, with seed sowing and pricking out, the potting up of rooted cuttings and the potting on of plants as they grow, the greenhouse is a hive of activity – the hub of the garden where propagation is occupying most of your time and most of its space.

With summer comes a different pace: the tomatoes and cucumbers, and the peppers and melons, will need care and attention, there are cuttings to be taken and rooted, but don't overlook your house of glass when it comes to making it beautiful. There are so many flowering pot plants to choose from nowadays that your greenhouse can become an explosion of colour and scent – a conservatory where you can escape the cloudy days and summer showers.

Alan takes pelargonium cuttings in a greenhouse bursting with colour, fragrance and tasty crops

> “Don’t overlook your house of glass when it comes to making it beautiful”





The summer greenhouse

There are times when it is impossible to sit down for very long in the garden, mainly because there are so many jobs to be done. Jobs, you notice, not *chores*.

I loathe that word. It makes pottering sound like a drudge and I love pottering. But in summer, aside from being handy with the hosepipe and watering can – of which more later – it is important that we remind ourselves why we do this. Allotment holders will do it for the joy of the harvest, but in 'the ornamental garden' what is the point in putting in all that work if we don't acknowledge and revel in those days when everything in the garden really is lovely?

Not that the work ever stops entirely. Summer is a time when plants are putting on more growth than at any other time of year, which means that shoot-tip cuttings are there aplenty if you want to make more plants. Even in summer a small propagating case is handy, not only for a steady supply of bottom heat – 21°C is sufficient – but the extra humidity provided by the plastic dome is particularly helpful at steadying the atmosphere.

ABOVE Pot up petunias and pinch out the tips for bushier plants full of flowers
TOP As melons ripen, support the heavy fruit in nets to stop stems bending and breaking

PHOTOS: SARAH CUTTLE; NEIL HEPWORTH; JASON INGRAM

> “I've come to look forward to the peace and quiet of the greenhouse on a bright summer's morning”

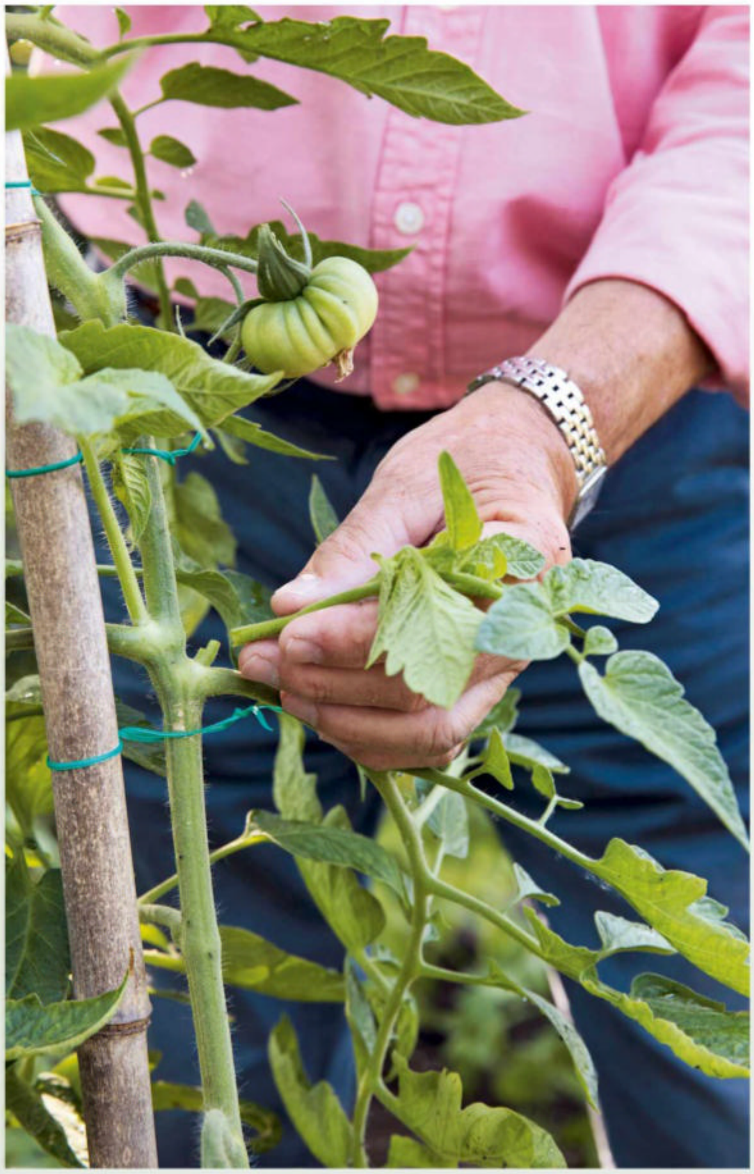
Softwood cuttings of shrubby salvias, fuchsias, solenostemon (coleus), penstemons and pelargoniums root rapidly at this time of year, in sandy compost, but do make sure you protect them from scorching sunshine or they will soon desiccate. Generally, when they begin to extend their shoots, they are sufficiently rooted to pot on individually into containers.

Tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers are thirsty blighters in summer, and you'll be well advised to check them for watering both morning and evening. Single-stem (cordon) tomatoes will need their sideshoots removing from the leaf axils and both 'toms' and 'cues' will need a support system to prevent their stems from toppling and fracturing. Tie in the stems with soft twine to prevent them kinking.

Spraying over open tomato flowers with water will encourage fruit setting, and if you are growing a variety of cucumber that is not 'all female', do make sure you remove all the male flowers before they can fertilise the females or the resulting fruits will be bitter. It really is well worth growing the female varieties such as 'Passandra' just to save you the worry and the bother. Melons, on the other hand, will need to be hand pollinated if they are to set fruit – push a ripe male flower into the centre of the female flower – identifiable by the small, immature fruit behind the petals. Support the swelling fruits in nets to prevent them from buckling the stems.

Any trays of seedlings are best placed on shelves as close to the eaves of the greenhouse as possible where the light is brightest. Here they will be less likely to become 'leggy' as they search for the light.

Seedlings such as *Salpiglossis* (painted tongue) and other flowering annuals



grown with the intention of providing decoration for the greenhouse – or the home – can be moved from their seed trays into pots. Three young plants to a 12cm pot will make a bright show.

It's also worth making late sowings of French and runner beans for planting out in a few weeks' time, so that your season of cropping is extended well into autumn.

You'll soon discover that greenhouse pot plants will dry out rapidly in summer. You might feel like a slave to the hosepipe or the watering can, but half an hour morning and evening will be well spent in making sure that your plants can grow without check. Regard it as your daily therapy rather than a bind – I've come to look forward to the peace and quiet of the greenhouse on a bright summer's morning when there are still a few birds singing.

Since they are growing faster than at any other time of year, all plants in pots and containers will need regular feeding. Once a week using dilute liquid tomato feed alternated with a seaweed-based plant tonic, will produce healthy plants that show their appreciation by flowering and fruiting well. It's not just your tomatoes that need a weekly feed – all other plants deserve the same treatment.

Essential maintenance

The word 'maintenance' has such dreary connotations, but in summer there are certain things well worth keeping an eye on to make sure that you get the best from your plants.

While clean glass is essential to make the most of light transmission, in summer bright sunshine can lead to problems such as browning of leaves and flowers and rapid drying out at the roots. Between the months of April and September it really does pay to install some kind of shading. At its simplest this may be a proprietary 'whitewash' painted on to the outside of

TOP LEFT Check tomatoes regularly and water mornings and evenings if needed **TOP RIGHT** Remove sideshoots from cordon tomatoes and tie in stems to a support **ABOVE** Greenhouse shading will help prevent scorching in bright sunlight the glass to diffuse the sun's rays. Alternatively you can invest in roller blinds positioned inside the greenhouse or, better still, outside, where they can be rolled down on sunny days and pulled back up when the weather is dull. I have the outside type and they are worth their weight – if not in gold then certainly in the plants that benefit from their effect.

Ventilation is vital in summer, especially to prevent temperatures rising to damaging levels. Ridge ventilators are essential, but so too are those in the sides of the greenhouse, which will ensure a flow of air. In high summer they can be left open morning and evening, though the 'best buys' for the summer greenhouse are automatic ventilating arms which will raise and lower the vents as the temperature inside the greenhouse rises and falls. I wouldn't be without them.

Damping down the floor of the greenhouse with water morning and evening not only helps to lower the temperature but also increases humidity, which at this time of year, is a great boost to plant growth.

Clean out your gutters; check that downpipes are fitted to water butts to make the most of summer showers (plants love rainwater) and carry out any running repairs, such as replacing cracked panes, broken door catches and window stays, while the weather is favourable.

Above all, think of your summer greenhouse as something of a sanctuary where you can be among beautiful plants that are sheltered from the natural extremes. ☐

Watering the greenhouse floor helps keep the temperature down and increases humidity

WHAT TO DO IN YOUR GREENHOUSE NOW

JULY

- ☐ **Get** into the habit of checking watering morning and evening.
- ☐ **Take** softwood cuttings and root them in a propagator.
- ☐ **Feed** all greenhouse plants once a week from now until September with dilute liquid plant feed.
- ☐ **Train** tomatoes, cucumbers and melons and make sure their stems are supported.
- ☐ **Remove** sideshoots from single-stemmed tomatoes.

AUGUST

- ☐ **Every** few weeks re-stage the plants – giving them more room to grow and turning them round so that they grow more evenly, rather than becoming one-sided.
- ☐ **Damp** down the floor and any gravel on the staging morning and evening.
- ☐ **Remove** faded leaves and flowers regularly to keep plants looking good and reduce the incidence of fungus diseases.
- ☐ **Ensure** that ventilation and shading are adequate.
- ☐ **Pot** on any plants that have outgrown their containers. I find a peat-free John Innes No.2 potting compost produces good growth on most plants and needs watering far less frequently than multipurpose peat-free compost.

Take softwood cuttings in July

PHOTOS: SARAH CUTTLE

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If you prefer to try before you buy, you can head to your nearest HSL showroom for a bespoke fitting from one of the seating experts. They'll take you through a seven-point seating assessment to make sure it's right for you, checking the hip position, seat height, seat depth, chair width, lower back support, arm positions, and neck and head support. You'll also be able to browse the fabric designs to ensure it fits with your décor.

There's no obligation, but if you do choose to make a purchase, you can opt for express delivery on selected products to get them delivered and assembled in the room of your choice in as little as three days. Can't get to a showroom? Book a free home visit and HSL will bring a chair to you for a fitting in the comfort of your own living room.

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The Aysgarth Four-Motor Riser Recliner is the latest addition to HSL's range, designed to give you independent control over the position of your head, back, lumbar and feet. It rises and reclines at the touch of a button and comes with a heat function as standard for maximum comfort.

HSL

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To find your perfect chair, pop into an HSL showroom, call the friendly Customer Care team on **01924 507 050** or visit **hslchairs.com**

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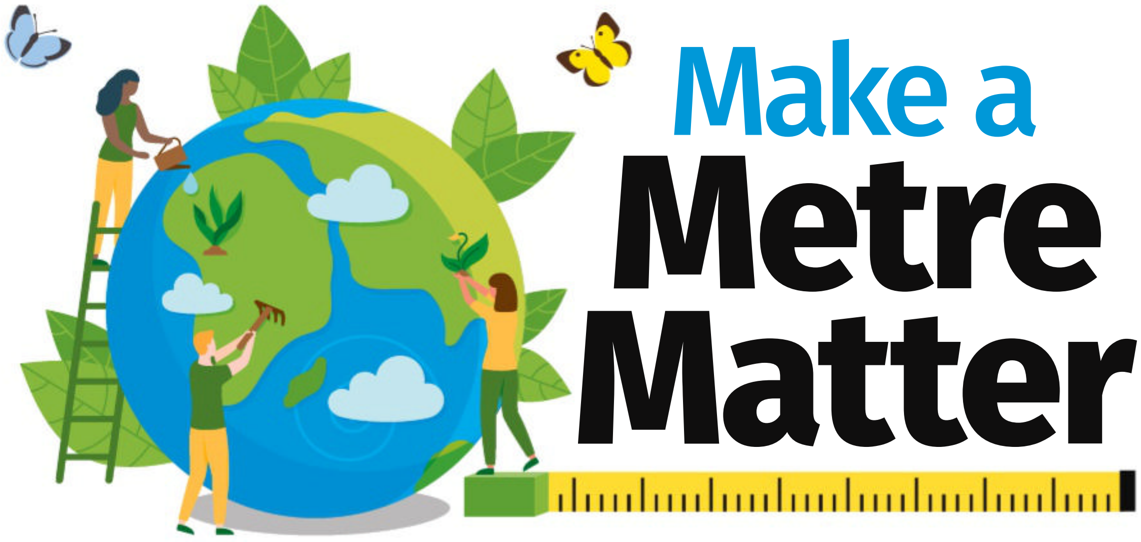

Make a Metre Matter

Create a habitat haven

The degradation and loss of natural habitats is one of the most critical issues facing wildlife today. And while we don't always think of the UK's estimated 23 million gardens as providing vital habitats, they have the potential to make a huge difference if we consider them as part of the wider landscape.

Collectively, our gardens contain around 3 million ponds and 30 million trees. But you don't need a huge water feature or mature trees to provide shelter, nest sites and places for wildlife to feed in your garden – even the smallest plot can provide a series of micro-habitats. What's more, if we work together with others in our local area, we can create networks of wildlife-friendly gardens that work rather like a community nature reserve.

You can do your bit to support beneficial creatures by dedicating a metre of space for wildlife habitats. Have fun with log piles, hoverfly lagoons and more…

PHOTO: PAUL DEBOIS. ILLUSTRATION: GETTY

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Making your wildlife haven

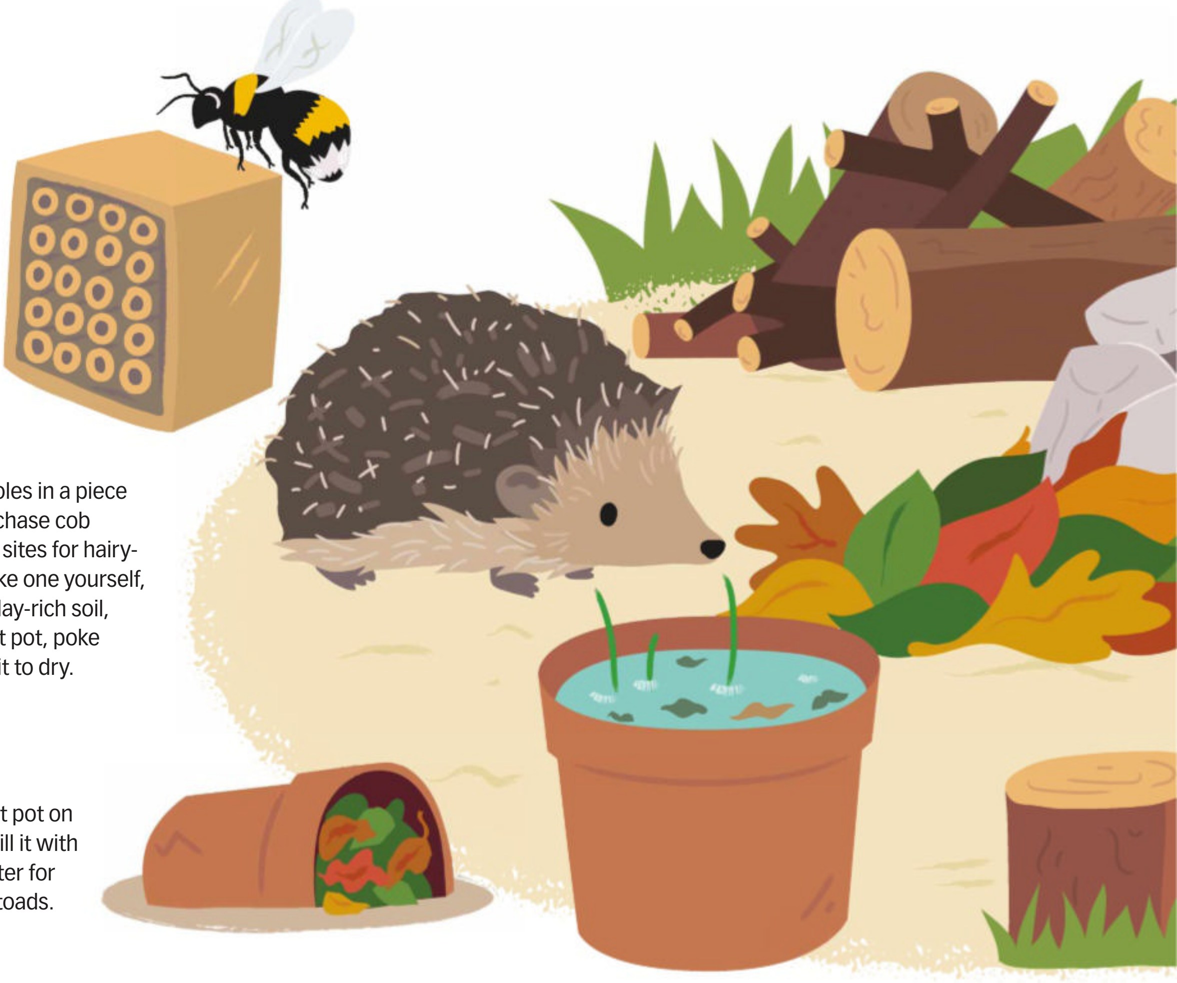
It's easy to create a beneficial habitat in just one metre. **Nic Wilson** lists the things that everyone can introduce to their garden

▶ COLLECT LEAVES

Create a leaf pile for amphibians, small mammals and invertebrates such as ground beetles, millipedes and spiders. Ground beetles will eat slugs, snails and aphids, while other invertebrates provide food for garden birds and mammals like hedgehogs and shrews.

▶ ATTACH A BEE HOTEL

Bumblebees had the worst season on record last year and solitary bees are struggling too, so the more support we can provide, the better. You can make a bee hotel (primarily for leaf-cutter and mason bees) by packing hollow plant stems into a wooden box or drilling holes in a piece of wood. You can also purchase cob bricks, which provide nest sites for hairy-footed flower bees. To make one yourself, pack a moistened mix of clay-rich soil, sand and straw into a plant pot, poke holes in the soil and leave it to dry.



▶ CREATE SHELTER

Half-bury a terracotta plant pot on its side in the ground and fill it with dead leaves to create shelter for amphibians like frogs and toads.

▼ BUILD RESTING PLACES

Place a flat rock in a sunny spot to give cold-blooded creatures, such as lizards and butterflies, a place to bask. Building a small cairn of stones in the shade will provide somewhere for reptiles and amphibians to keep cool in the heat of the day.

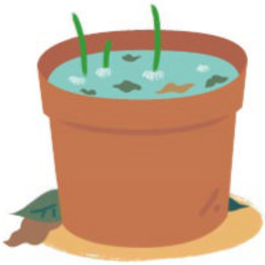
▶ PLANT CLIMBERS

If your habitat haven borders a garden fence, fix some trellis in front of the fence, leaving a gap of 10cm for insects, birds and small mammals. Plant climbers, such as honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*), to grow up the trellis and create sheltered cavities for wildlife.

ILLUSTRATIONS: IAN CUNLIFFE

▶ PUT UP BIRD BOXES

If your habitat haven backs onto a north- or east-facing house wall, put up bird boxes to provide nest sites. Swift bricks and boxes are ideal as they are also popular with sparrows, starlings and, occasionally, house martins – all red-listed species that need our help.



▲ MAKE A DUST BATH

Leave a patch of bare soil to create a place for house sparrows to dust bathe. Bare areas might also attract ground-nesting solitary bees or wasps, especially if you have sandy soil. Wet soil provides house martins, blackbirds and song thrushes with much-needed mud for their nests.

◀ MAKE LARVAE LAGOONS

Pack grass clippings or leaf litter into a small plant pot without drainage holes, then fill it with rainwater to create a lagoon for hoverfly species with aquatic larvae. Add twigs sticking out of the water, place a final layer of leaves on top and put the container in a plant tray filled with more leaf litter so that the larvae can climb out and pupate in the base, before emerging a few weeks later as adult hoverflies.

▲ ATTRACT BEETLES

Make piles of dead wood on top of the soil and partially bury one or two logs upright in the soil to attract detritivores, such as stag beetles, whose larvae usually live underground in rotting wood.

▼ LEAVE LOG PILES

Log piles are important habitats for wildlife, particularly invertebrates. Add some sticks and twigs to create smaller gaps. Plant woodland perennials such as primroses or ferns in the gaps, or encourage a climber like clematis to scramble across the pile.

Dos & don'ts

✓ Do make sure there are gaps in boundaries so wildlife can get in and out of your garden – hedgehog holes need to be at least 13cm x 13cm

✓ Do leave natural resources like dead leaves, twigs and moss for wildlife to use in nest building

✓ Do attach bee hotels securely to a wall or fence and situate them in a sunny spot

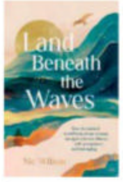
✓ Do encourage neighbours to join in, to make sure wildlife has access to a network of local habitats

✓ Do get involved with citizen science projects such as the BIG Hedgehog Map (bighedgehogmap.org) and Butterfly Conservation's Big Butterfly Count, which runs from 18 July to 10 August

✗ Don't feel you need a large garden to make space for wildlife – every habitat patch helps create connectivity

✗ Don't use treated wood in habitat piles as it contains chemicals intended to kill fungi and invertebrates

✗ Don't leave pet hair out for birds to use in nests because it can contain chemicals from flea treatments that can harm chicks



■ **Nic Wilson** is the author of *Land Beneath the Waves* (Summersdale, £18.99)

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Make a Metre Matter

Next month

boost your soil health

with homemade compost

Step by step

Gardening on a shady slope can be a challenge but for David McFarline it was an opportunity to create a lush, multi-layered sanctuary for his family and wildlife

WORDS SONYA PATEL ELLIS **PHOTOS** JASON INGRAM

David transformed his sloping site by adding steps, which now merge into the garden, as plants sprout and spread between the treads

Gardens of the Year
COMPETITION 2024
sponsored by Alpen

David McFarline

"I grew up in the countryside in Northern Ireland but now live in London. The garden allows me to live in a city but still have that connection to nature that I lost when leaving home"

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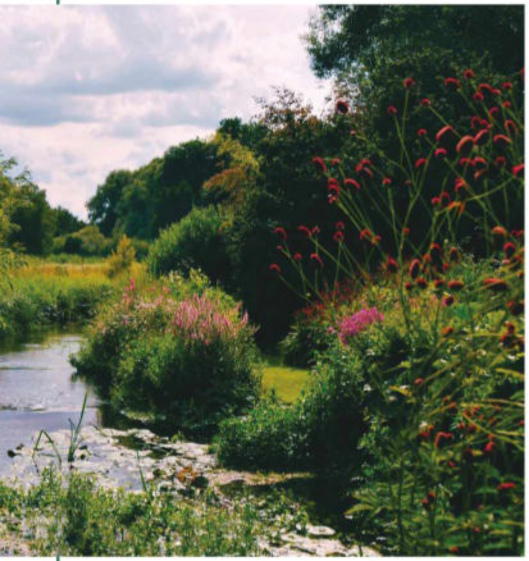

Fullers Mill

fullersmill.org.uk

This award-winning garden offers unusual shrubs, perennials, lilies and marginal plants. Fresh with growth in spring, lilies begin a succession of flowering, creating a spectacular show of colour into summer. golden hues illuminate autumn days and streams sparkle in winter as snowdrops awaken.

West Stow, Bury Saint Edmunds, Suffolk, IP28 6HD

2 April - 31 October, Wed, Fri, Sat & Sun 11am – 5pm

The Laskett

thelaskett.org.uk
Booking essential

This remarkable year-round garden brings a biographical celebration of the arts to the Herefordshire countryside. A celebration of tulips proudly proclaims the arrival of spring. Summer makes a grand entrance with fantastic vistas. Theatrical topiary and architecture take centre stage in autumn.

Laskett Lane, Much Birch, Herefordshire HR2 8HZ

1 April - 30 October, Tue, Wed & Thu 10:30am & 2:30pm

York Gate

yorkgate.org.uk

This magical garden is brimming with garden rooms inspired by the arts and crafts movement. Colour bursts to life in spring and summer displaying tulips, tropical plants and wildflowers. Timeless structure draws the eye in autumn and winter with a masterpiece of pattern, topiary, and a finale of snowdrops.

Back Church Lane, Leeds, West Yorkshire LS16 8DW

2 April - 31 October, Wed - Sun 10am till 4pm

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For further information about Perennial and our gardens please visit **perennial.org.uk**

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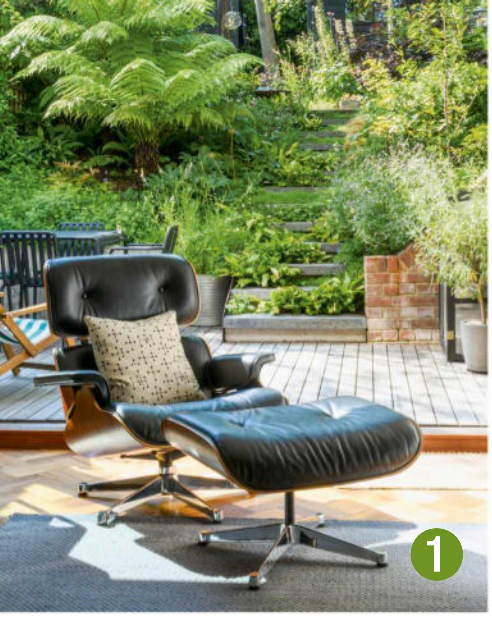

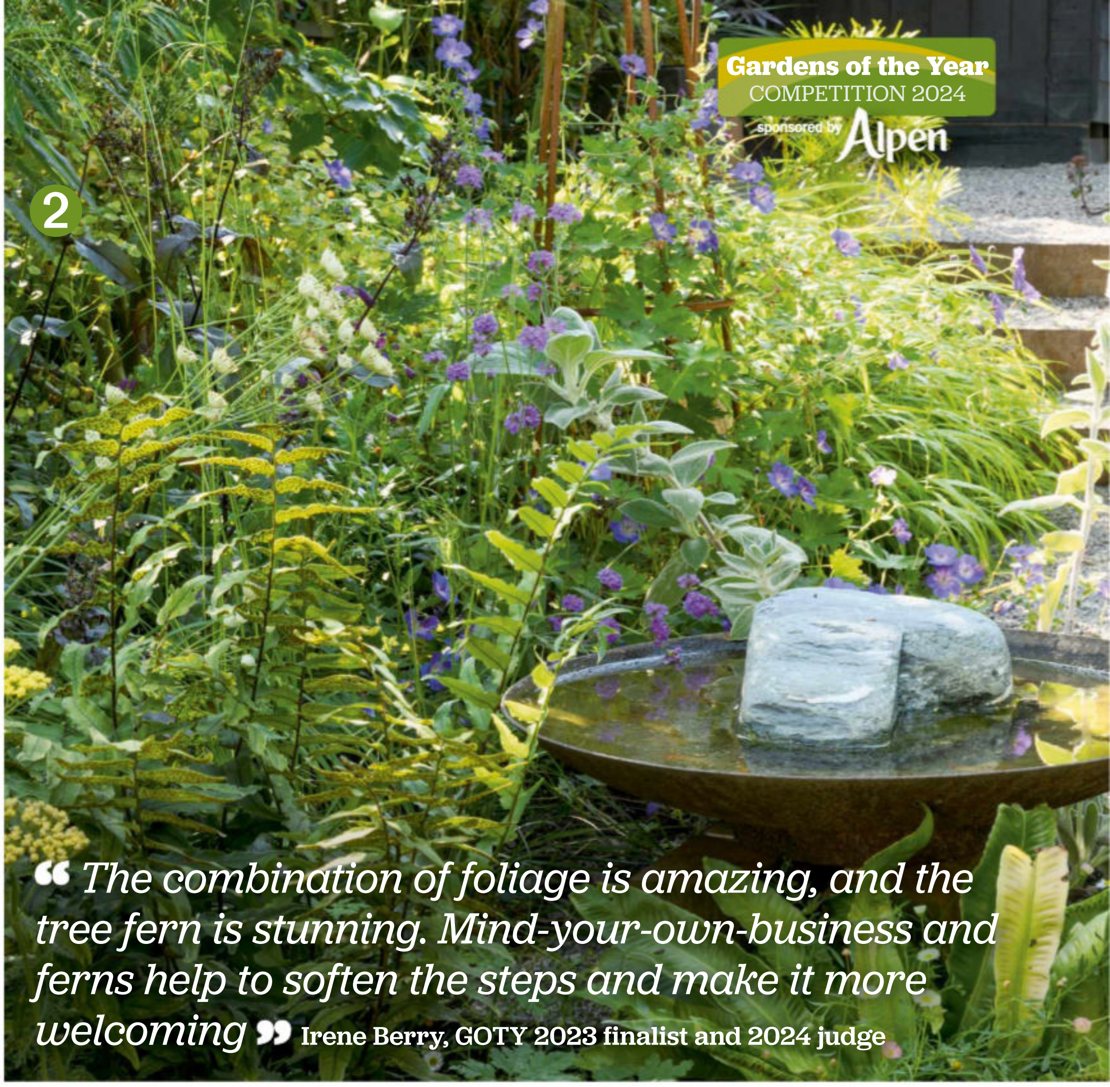
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Gardens of the Year
COMPETITION 2024
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> “ The combination of foliage is amazing, and the tree fern is stunning. Mind-your-own-business and ferns help to soften the steps and make it more welcoming ” Irene Berry, GOTY 2023 finalist and 2024 judge

When David McFarline and his family moved into their 1960s home in 2018, the shady, sloping garden was just rubble and weeds. Turning it into a manageable wild-style garden was clearly going to take time and creativity. But with advice from a landscape designer, David has created a three-tier, green oasis that ties in beautifully with the Modernist-style house. There are areas for dining, children's play and watching wildlife, plus space to potter with plants among the concrete-boarded walls and steps. It's now a tranquil, subtly shifting sanctuary for the whole family.

How big is your garden?

The garden is 5m wide, which is the same as the width of the house. It goes back about 14m to the rear fence where the shed is located, with most of the garden on a slope.

How long have you lived here?

We moved here in December 2018, initially focusing on the inside of the house. Work on the garden began in 2021 and it took about three years to create the vista you see now.

What was your garden like when you moved in?

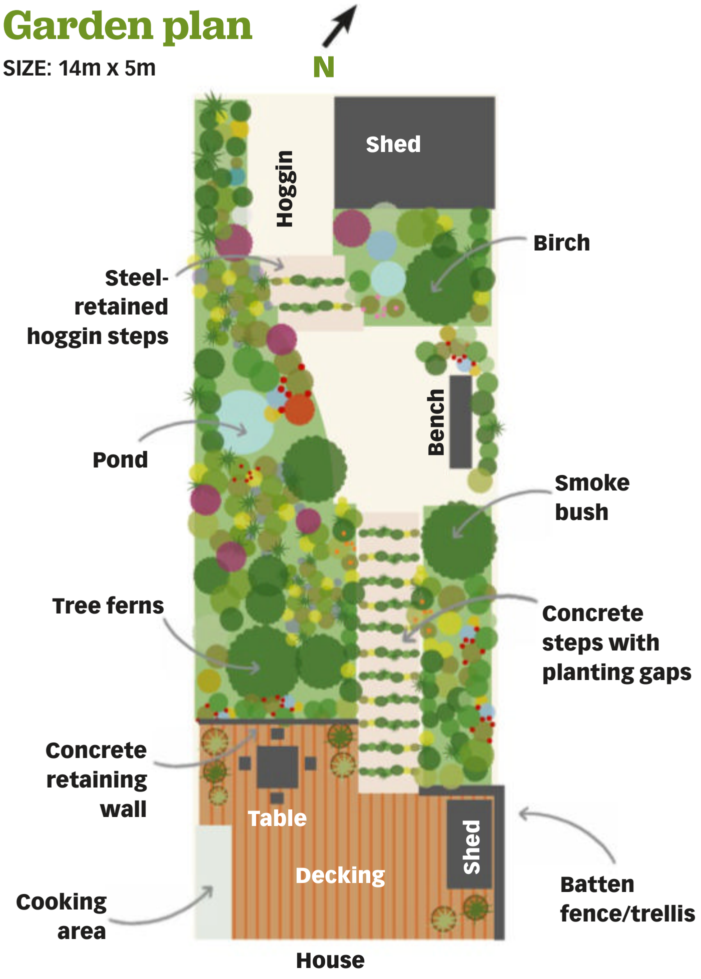
When we arrived, there was a huge poplar at the back, where the shed now stands. The garden had a slow gradient from front to back with a few basic steps, but it was mostly filled with ivy, weeds and building rubble from previous construction work. It was quite messy and overgrown and needed a boundary fence on the right-hand side.

❶ Elements of modernist and mid-century modern design run through the interiors and garden of David's 1960s house

❷ A pond nestles between lush plantings of ferns, astrantia and summer-blooming *Geranium* Rozanne

Garden plan

SIZE: 14m x 5m


N
Hoggin
Shed
Birch
Steel-retained hoggin steps
Bench
Pond
Smoke bush
Tree ferns
Concrete steps with planting gaps
Concrete retaining wall
Table
Decking
Shed
Batten fence/trellis
Cooking area
House

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What have you done to create your garden?

At first we thought we could just garden the space into shape, but it soon became clear it would be a much bigger job than that, largely due to the slope. All the rubble needed to be removed, which was a huge task that required access from the top of the site, as it couldn't go through the house. This is also how we brought in the soil and larger plants.

Once that was done, the garden could be levelled off at the top and bottom, creating areas for seating and entertaining, and for a shed and pots. We also commissioned a landscaping company to help create some modernist features, such as the board-formed concrete walls around the decking and staggered concrete steps that can be planted up.

We also got permission to remove the large poplar tree at the back, which let in more light. My plans for a shade garden then morphed into one that crossed different zones of shade, partial shade and some pockets of light.

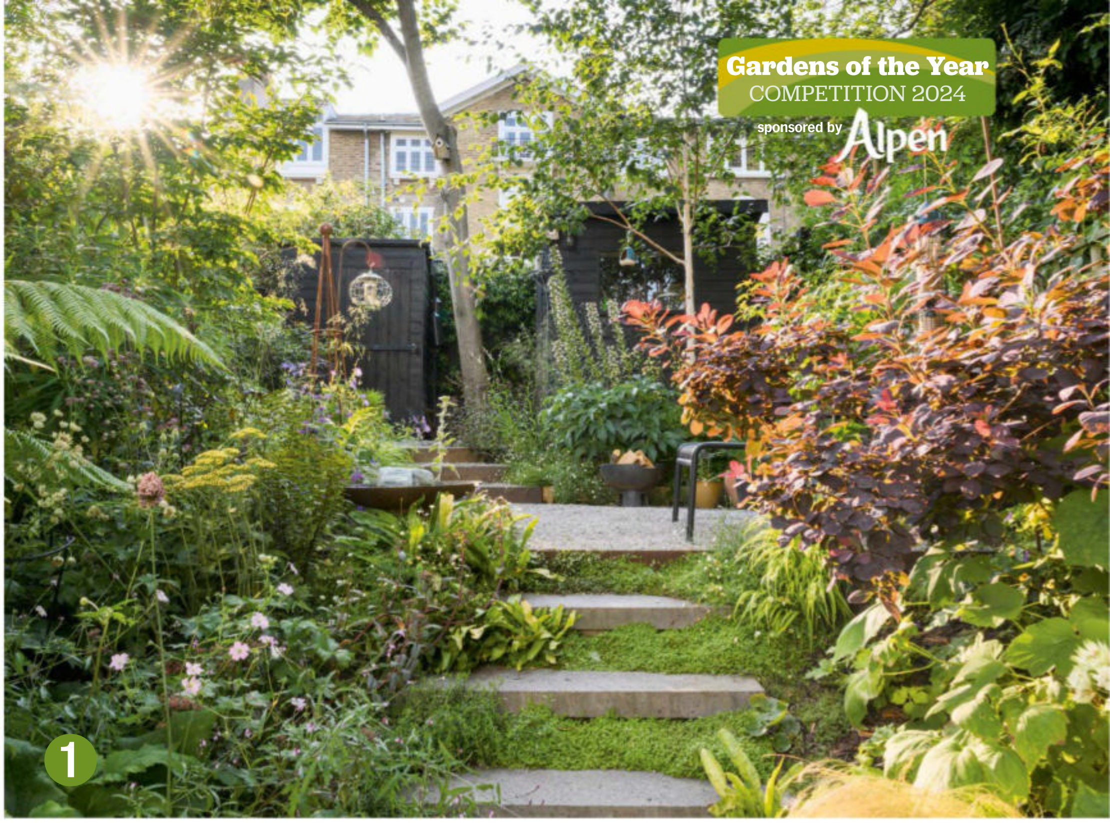
What was the inspiration for your garden?

The main inspiration was to maximise planting, with as much greenery as possible. We didn't want a lawn, but we wanted visual interest all year round, with plants rotating through the seasons.

Architecturally, we were influenced by modernist and mid-century modern materials and styles, such as the board-formed concrete surfaces of the Southbank Centre in London. The dark wood decking also ties into the interior wood tones of the house. There was an intention to link the 1960s architecture of the house with the garden's style.

Have you had help from friends, family, partner or professionals?

My brother-in-law helped with building the fencing, which turned out to be a much bigger job than we thought due to rubble and roots in the ground. I also enlisted a garden designer and landscaper to help realise some hard landscaping features and get advice on ideal plants. The neighbours at the back helped practically by allowing us to use

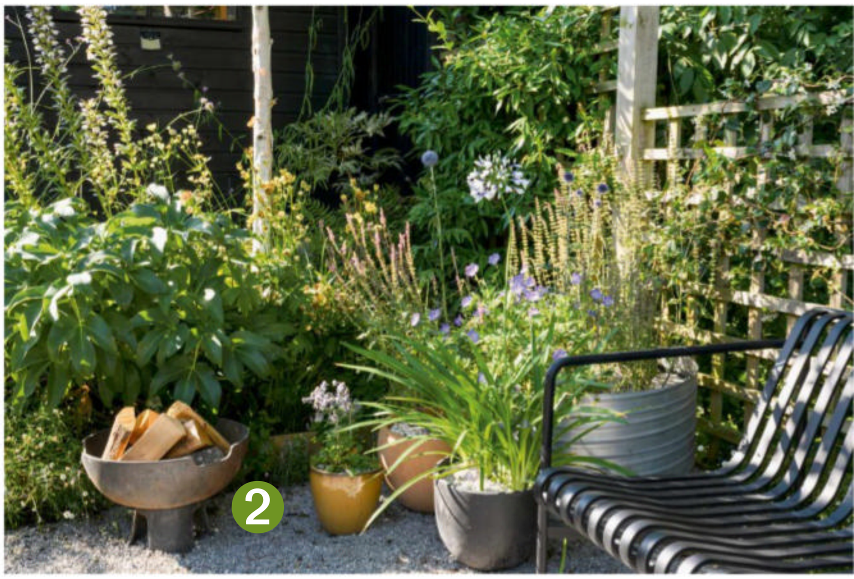


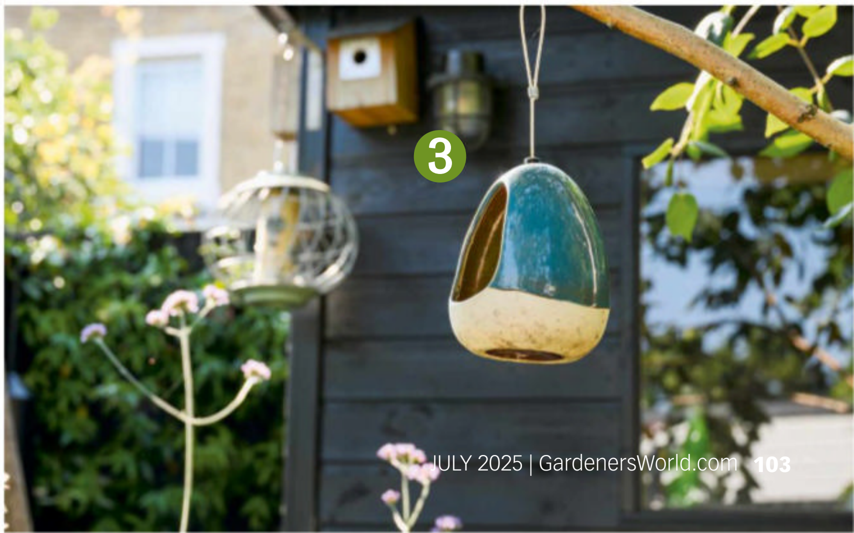
> *“I love the concrete slips by the decking, and it's interesting to hear that David loves working in his garden, which obviously takes a bit of work to maintain”* **Oliver Hymans, GOTY 2023 finalist and 2024 judge**

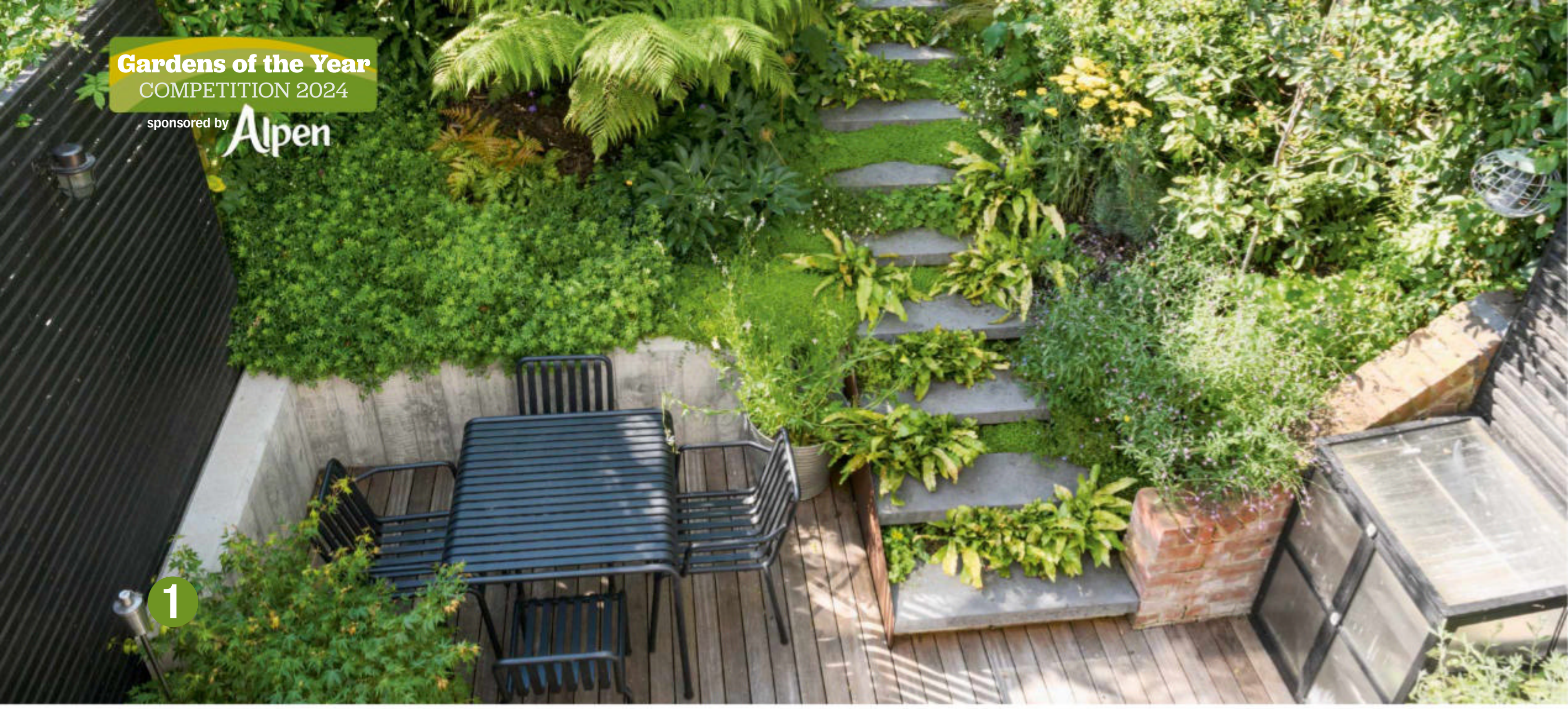
❶ By the steps up to the pond and shed, a bronze-leaved *Cotinus coggygria* ‘Royal Purple’ catches the sun

❷ Pots of agapanthus, veronicastrum and hardy geranium, in shades of blue, white and pink, soften an upper seating area

❸ The garden has been designed to attract wildlife using pollinator-friendly flowers, bird feeders and nest boxes







> “I thought this was a very successful garden with clever use of what is an awkward sloping space to create an intimate area to relax in. I liked the seating area halfway up – it's a nice sunny spot and adds to that journey through the garden” **Clive Johnson-Cooper, GOTY 2023 winner and 2024 judge**

① **The flight of 1960s-inspired, planted-up concrete steps and a low board-formed concrete wall are key features of the garden**

② **David spends almost every weekend in the garden, planting something new, just tidying up or watching nature evolve**

their access when we removed the tree and brought in materials.

What are the biggest challenges you faced?

Time has been the biggest challenge – finding enough of it! Then there are the environmental extremes: we had a heatwave that hit 40°C and some plants got completely scorched, especially in the sunnier areas. I've really had to think about what will survive better if that happens again. We've also had trouble with slugs and snails after initially including lots of hostas, so we've replaced those with ferns in the shadier areas. Logistically, the garden was hard to access for building work, but temporarily removing the back fence and using our neighbour's access helped enormously.

What elements are you most proud of?

I'm especially proud of the tree ferns – we started with one and now have three. Seeing them come back stronger each year is really satisfying. The steps are another highlight. They've aged beautifully, and the planting between them gives them a wild, almost hidden quality. They look like part of the garden now, rather than something constructed.

What is your favourite area of the garden?

It's hard to choose just one, but I do love the slope. From inside the house you get a full view of the garden, and the layers of planting create a lush, immersive feel. At night – and in the darker days of winter – the lighting on the steps and under various plants makes the space even more magical.

How do you use the garden on a daily basis?

We use the front decking area for cooking. There's a barbecue and space to entertain, and my son plays out there too, so sometimes we put up a canopy to shade it. The area at the back is nice for catching the evening sun with a coffee, although I rarely sit still – I usually end up pottering and tidying. There are also lots of bird feeders and a small water feature, which attract wildlife. It's a real haven, even in the middle of London. The birds know when I'm back because they wait on the fence for me to refill the feeders!

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- Tours of **Tirana** and **Durrës**
- Tour of **Vlorë,** including a visit to the **Monastery of Adrenica**
- Drive along the **Albanian Riviera** with visits to **Llogara National Park, Ali Pasha Castle** and **Sarandë**
- Tour of UNESCO-listed **Butrint** and **Gjirokastër**
- Day trip to **Berat** and the **Apollonia Archaeological Park** with visit to the **Onufri Museum**
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As you take in Albania's classical monuments, you'll also find a vibrant and unique modern culture thriving within its cities. Keep an eye out for colourful murals lining the walls of communist-era landmarks as you wander and enjoy the innovative galleries and installations that have sprouted from Enver Hoxha's former 'mushroom' bunkers since the turn of the century.

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- **DAY 4** Day trip to Vlorë
- **DAY 5** Tour of Llogara National Park with visits to Ali Pasha Castle and Sarandë
- **DAY 6** Day trip to Butrint and Gjirokastër
- **DAY 7** Tour of Berat and Apollonia Park
- **DAY 8** Fly back to the UK

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There are plenty of ways to get out and enjoy nature in Sicily

Garden globetrotting: *Sicily*

Sicily is famous for its volcano, but there's so much more to disover, as Adam Duxbury found on his visit, exploring vibrant botanical gardens and a beautiful landscape of olive groves, vineyards and citrus orchards

Adam Duxbury,
Head of Content

PHOTOS: ALEX FILZ PHOTOGRAPHY; GETTY (REDA)

I have to admit that before visiting Sicily, my knowledge of the Mediterranean's largest island was sparse. Of course, I knew about Mount Etna and had grown up with all the cultural cliches about Sicilian mafia families. But what really surprised me was just how green, fertile and picturesque the island was – even in November. Towering mountains leadto agricultural plains and much of what we saw seemed to be given over to vineyards, olive groves and orchards that were full of citrus fruits, nuts and peaches.

My partner and I took a short trip to Sicily and found it an ideal getaway from the grey British weather, with pleasant temperatures that were even warm enough for a (very brief) dip in the sea. We flew into Catania, a city on the east side of the island, and took a couple of hours to visit the Botanical Garden of Catania. This free public garden is a quiet, charming spot with several themed sections including a Sicilian garden that acts as a mini assemblage of some of the island's key native plants. Make sure to visit the Tepidarium too, a large tropical greenhouse which houses over 160 plant species, including orchids.

Most of our trip was spent further west on the Agrigento coast where we stayed at the ADLER spa resort. The hotel is situated on the edge of a nature reserve and we found it to be a great base to explore some of Sicily's natural beauty, either via hikes or bike rides. Be sure to book a guided tour of the hotel's lovely kitchen garden and grounds if you visit.

Our next stop was directly across the island to the capital, Palermo. Descending

The Botanical Garden of Catania has a diverse collection of palm trees

the winding mountain road down into the coastal city feels exciting and just a little unnerving as drivers seem to fly out from every direction. We were lucky enough to be staying in the beautifully restored Bella Palermo, a family-owned palazzo right in the heart of the old city. There are many public palazzos to explore and the atmosphere throughout the winding streets is fantastic.

Although we had left the countryside behind, nature was right outside our window in the form of an enormous fig tree standing proud in the courtyard. Palermo is well known for its impressive array of figs (*Ficus carica*) dotted throughout the city. The most impressive one of all is an enormous specimen located in The Botanical Garden of the University of Palermo, and it's thought to be Europe's largest tree. Make sure you set aside plenty of time to explore this huge botanic garden, as it's a wonderful place to spot even more native, tropical and subtropical species. There are glass houses, ponds and a great collection of succulents.

There are many more gardens and so much history, culture and beautiful scenery to explore in Sicily – not to mention the delicious food – that I'm sure I'll be visiting again soon.

ESSENTIAL INFO

Spring (April to June) and autumn (September to October) are ideal times to visit, when the weather is pleasant and there are fewer crowds. However, the island has something to offer all year round. Try ***adler-resorts.com*** *for a luxurious experience in the south and* ***labellapalermo.com*** *for a special stay in Palermo.*

Inspired by Sicily

Sicily offers plenty of inspiration to the UK gardener, from the fruit trees and herbs that are grown in abundance for market, to the classical appeal of a stone water fountain – here are some of my top takeaways to try on a small scale in your own gardens.

Sicily is well-known for its oranges, which thrive in the warm climate

CITRUS GROVES

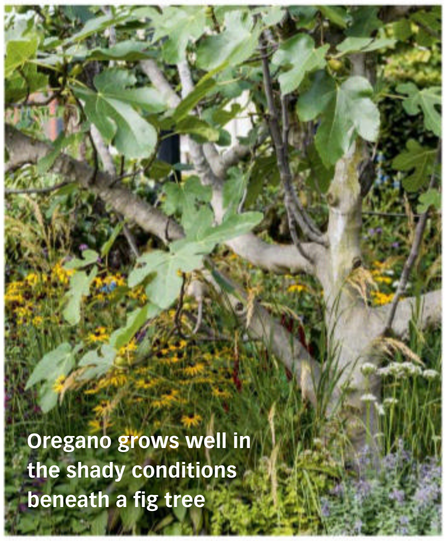
I loved seeing the citrus orchards that are emblematic of the island's agricultural heritage. Lemon and blood orange (*Citrus sinensis* 'Sanguinelli') thrive in Sicily's warm climate. For UK gardens, consider dwarf varieties like *C.* x *limon* 'Meyer' or *C. sinensis* 'Tarocco' in pots. Plant in free-draining soil with added organic matter and position in the sunniest spot you can give it. They can be moved to a frost-free location during winter.

WATER FEATURES

One of the things that struck me most about Sicilian gardens was their fusion of cultural influences, especially the Arab-Norman elements in their water features. From simple fountains to elaborate irrigation channels, water brings movement and tranquillity to Sicily's gardens. I would love to replicate a Sicilian-style water feature at home, perhaps using local stone, or even a terracotta pot, surrounded by Mediterranean herbs.

FIG TREES AS FOCAL POINTS

I loved seeing all the magnificent fig trees punctuating the streets and parks of Palermo. In the UK, a hardy variety such as *Ficus carica* 'Brown Turkey' or 'Brunswick' grown against a sunny wall would make an attractive addition to the garden. The distinctive lobed leaves of figs are useful for providing summer shade. Inspired by Sicily I'm planning to grow one in a large pot, underplanted with drought-tolerant herbs such as oregano and thyme.



Oregano grows well in the shady conditions beneath a fig tree

Even a small fountain can have a calming effect in a garden

PHOTOS: GETTY (REDA); PAUL DEBOIS; JASON INGRAM

NEXT MONTH Digital Editor Blake Roberts visits St Lucia and shares his experiences of the Caribbean island

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- **DAY 1** Arrival in Sicily
- **DAY 2** Valley of the Temples
- **DAY 3** Piazza Armerina & Taormina
- **DAY 4** Taormina
- **DAY 5** Mount Etna
- **DAY 6** Free day
- **DAY 7** Syracuse
- **DAY 8** Return home

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Timetable

- **DAY 1** Arrival in Trapani
- **DAY 2** Erice
- **DAY 3** Segesta & Marsala
- **DAY 4** Palermo
- **DAY 5** Free day in Cefalù
- **DAY 6** Aeolian Islands
- **DAY 7** Madonie Natural Park & Castelbuono
- **DAY 8** Return home

Isola Bella, Taormina

Marsala salt pans

Cefalù

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Which? Recommended Provider

RIVIERA TRAVEL

Gavin and Claire are continuing the family business, offering an impressive array of quality home-grown plants

PHOTO: JASON INGRAM

A family affair

In a new series showcasing notable UK nurseries, **Humaira Ikram** explores a Scottish nursery that grows and sells a range of desirable ornamentals

Macplants is located near Edinburgh and offers a bountiful selection of carefully chosen, garden-worthy plants – good, robust varieties, as well as some slightly quirkier, unusual or newer options. These include ferns, herbaceous alpines, roses, ornamental grasses and perennials, available via the website or from the nursery shop. Macplants is particularly known for its autumn gentians, meconopsis, ferns and sanguisorbas.

It's early morning when I arrive to take a look around. I drive through the gently undulating East Lothian landscape and the sun appears through the clouds when I turn into the nursery between two high hedges.

Beryl McNaughton established Macplants in 1979. Initially she grew and sold plants from her back garden and had a little residency selling plants at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, which she would deliver in her car. Her husband and business partner Dr Ian McNaughton, a government breeder of agricultural brassicas, used his spare time to focus on autumn gentians, which are still some of the nursery's most striking specialist plants.

The nursery has moved location and grown since then, and is now run by the couple's son and daughter, Gavin and Claire. Gavin explains that after finishing a PhD in biochemistry in 1994, he decided to focus on the family business. But Beryl still comes to work every day, even though she's officially retired.

Claire is responsible for the retail side of the nursery, as well as its consistent focus on garden-worthy perennials. She says there has been a huge increase of interest in shade-loving plants and in particular ferns, so the nursery offers a notably wide selection. As well as selling direct to the public, Macplants also supplies trade clients, both in the landscape business and garden centres.

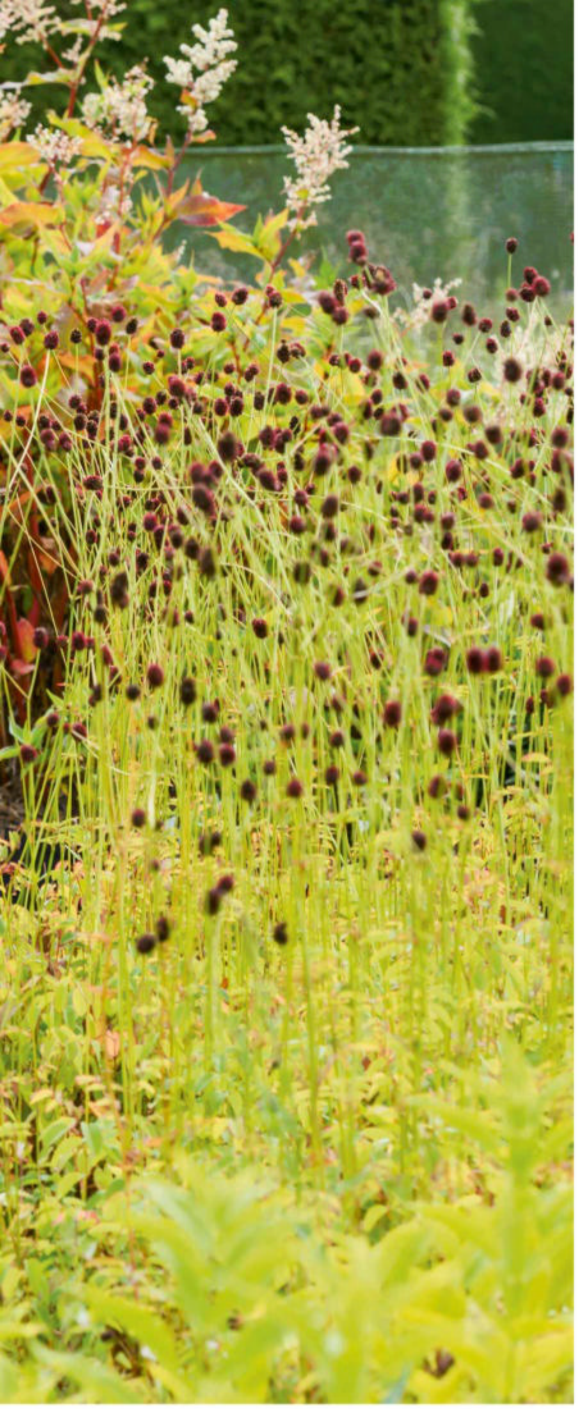
The nursery occupies a nine-acre site at Berrybank, near Pencaitland, 10km south east of Edinburgh and 5km from the sea. About 3.5 acres are used to grow, sell and propagate plants, while the rest of the site is left as paddocks. Unexpectedly, the nursery sits on a seam of clay, while many of its local clients are on sandier and more free-draining soils, so it stocks a diverse selection of plants that can work well in most soil types.

Eco-friendly growing

To pot on the nursery's wide range of plants – from alpines to ferns – Macplants has created its own carefully considered peat-free compost, made mostly from local

PHOTOS: JASON INGRAM

ABOVE Claire recommends cutting back sanguisorbas after flowering if you don't want them to self-seed **RIGHT** Beryl McNaughton set up Macplants 46 years ago and, despite retiring, she is still hard at work **FAR RIGHT** Many ferns, such as this blechnum, are easy to divide to make new plants



Macplants' expert tips

Ferns

MacPlants grows and sells a wide range of ferns, from those that like moist shade to sun- and drought-tolerant options. Most are easy to grow if you follow these simple tips:

- Ferns are generally straightforward to look after – they suffer from few pests and diseases, and need no extra feeding regime.
- Plant ferns in spring or autumn, taking care not to plant too deeply – leave the crown just above the soil surface.
- Water in newly planted ferns well and continue to water them regularly through their first year, to help them get established.
- Mulch around the base of moisture-loving ferns with chipped bark, topping it up whenever needed.
- Tidy up ferns by cutting back the tatty old foliage in early spring when the new fronds are about to unfurl.
- Established ferns are easily divided by splitting the clump in half or into pieces depending on the size. Replant or pot them up so they are sitting at the same level as they were previously.

Sanguisorbas

Popular with designers and gardeners alike, sanguisorbas are one of MacPlants' favourite herbaceous perennials. They come in a range of heights and flower colours, and between them have a long flowering season from June right into autumn. They are easy to grow and propagate:

- The number one rule when growing sanguisorbas is to plant them in a moist but free-draining soil. They don't like sitting in wet soil over winter, so good drainage is crucial. To improve your soil, particularly if it's clay, fork through plenty of garden compost before planting.
- Water new plants regularly until they are established.
- Taller varieties will benefit from support – and grow-through supports are best. Insert them above the clump in spring to allow the stems to grow up and through them for unseen help.
- Sanguisorbas self-seeds freely, but if you want to avoid this, cut back the faded flowers right to the base. They will soon shoot again.
- They are easy to propagate by dividing established clumps in spring.

green-waste materials. The family is keen to use natural and organic compounds, and biocontrols such as nematodes, to keep on top of pests and diseases. They also advocate for natural predators, and have left areas of the nursery wild and untouched to encourage more of them.

When I visited, I also met the nursery's cat, Zak – a shy and retiring kind of cat, which fits in well with the feel of the nursery. Unassuming, but brilliant. It's one of those rare places where you want to spend a lot of time, a business that is open seven days a week through spring and summer, but still feels like the family has lavished time and effort on every plant they grow.

So, what is the secret to running a successful nursery? Gavin says, "It is just hard work... but if you can get the balance right between the stress and the reward, then it's the way of life for you."

Macplants' pick of July performers

TOP 3 SANGUISORBAS

These pollinator-friendly perennials enjoy a moist but free-draining, sunny location.

① 'Little Angel'
This short variety produces neat little red-button flowers. The foliage is prettily variegated (green with creamy white edges) making it perfect for the front of a border.
Height x Spread 30cm x 30cm
Flowers Jun-Jul

② 'Burr Blanc'
White, upright, cylindrical flowerheads with showy stamens, give a fluffy look. It's a good for dotting through prairie-style planting, the pale flowers providing bright highlights among grasses and wildflowers.
H x S 1m x 50cm **F** Jul-Aug

③ 'Lilac Squirrel'
The ideal variety to make a statement, with spectacular pink squirrel-tail flowerheads wafting prettily, high above the foliage.
H x S 1m x 60cm **F** Jul-Aug

TOP 3 FERNS

With their rich diversity of foliage, ferns are a great option for shady areas, in the ground or in pots, and are easy and undemanding.

① *Blechnum penna-marina*
A dwarf evergreen fern for a shady rock garden or for growing in crevices, as it likes a moist, shady spot. The fronds are coppery when young and will eventually form a dense carpet. **H x S** 25cm x 60cm

② *Dryopteris erythrosora prolifica*
This evergreen has glossy coppery fronds that darken to a deep leathery green as the season progresses. A good choice for a partially or even fully shaded location.
H x S 60cm x 50cm

③ *Polystichum setiferum* 'Herrenhausen'
This semi-evergreen is the solution for a dry, shady spot, producing a compact shuttlecock of finely divided fronds that create a lacy effect. **H x S** 50cm x 50cm

■ Macplants
macplants.co.uk
Tel 01875 341179
Address Berrybank Nursery,
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PHOTOS: JASON INGRAM

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Narcissus 'Niveth' - A beautiful white variety with broad petals which sit behind a flared trumpet - pleasantly scented.

Narcissus 'Golden Dawn' - A cup-shaped daffodil, which produces up to three flowers on each stem.

Narcissus 'Tête-a-Tête' - A much loved variety with a delightful fragrance.

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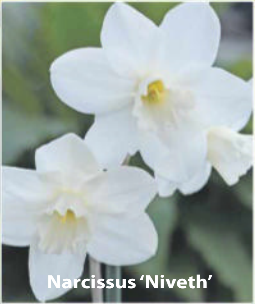
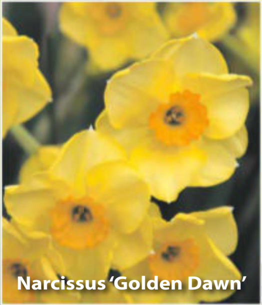
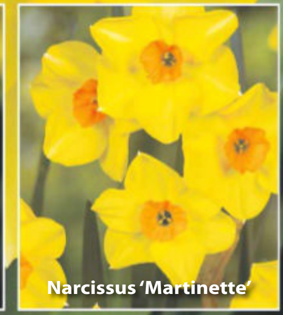
Narcissus 'Tête-a-Tête'



Narcissus 'Niveth'



Narcissus 'Golden Dawn'



Narcissus 'Martinette'

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Propagate your pots

Create beautiful, planet-friendly containers that don't break the bank, using home-propagated plants and flowers. Money-saving gardening expert **Anya Lautenbach** shows how

PHOTOS SARAH CUTTLE

When I was growing up, we didn't have much, but we always had a stunning garden filled with beautiful flowers, and our pots were a real highlight. Most plants were propagated by my mum, which later in life inspired me to create my garden and my pots in a sustainable and cost-effective way, by taking cuttings of plants that do well in our garden and growing them from seed. It's amazing what you can achieve with a few stems taken as cuttings and some packets of seeds.

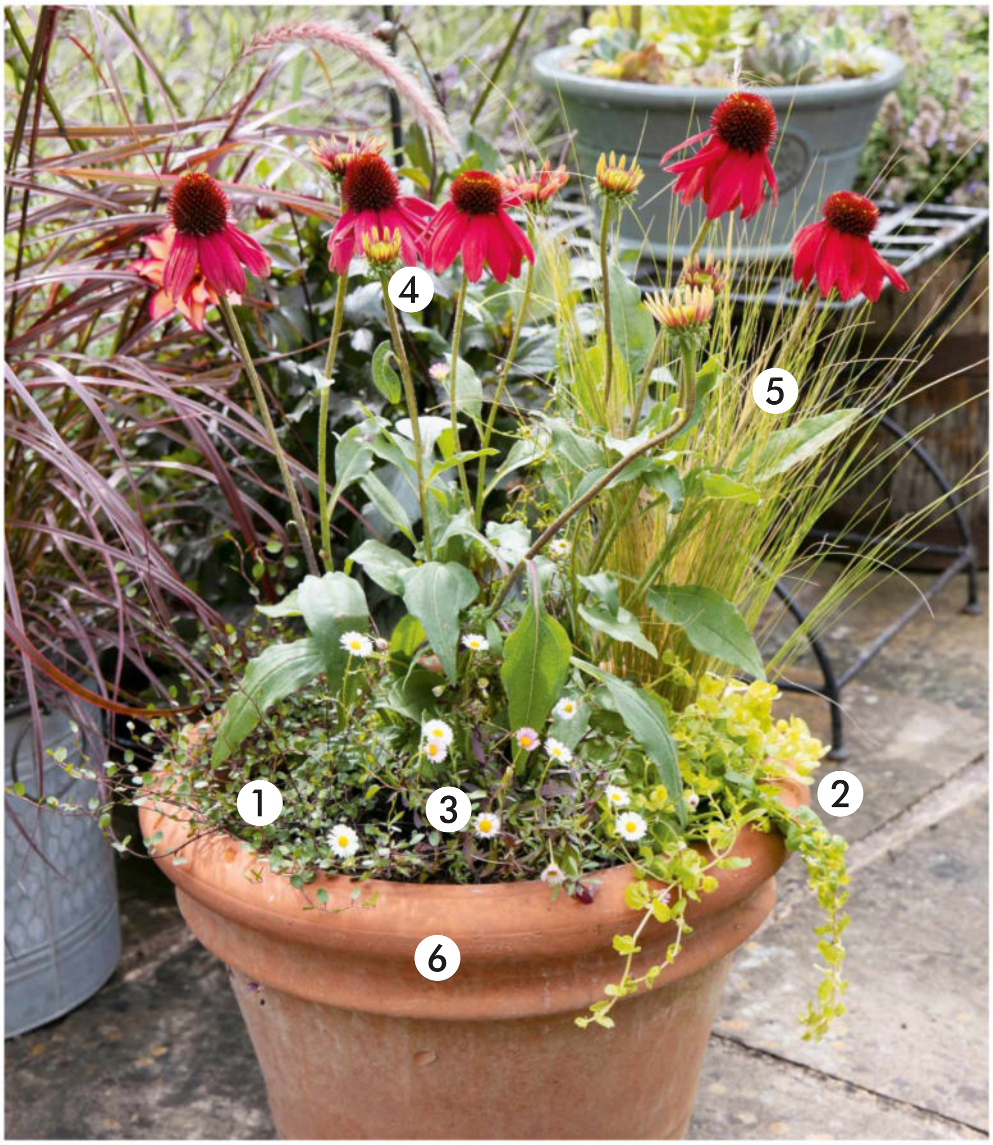
We always treated ourselves to a few plants purchased from a small local nursery. A trip there was like a celebration for us. The gratification from buying a plant, mixed with a sense of accomplishment from our home-propagated plants, gave us so much joy.

Our pots were dotted around our garden, placed on our balcony and on our outside windowsills. The pots themselves were like little gardens full of colours, textures and shapes, each like a floral symphony bringing our beloved flowers closer to us and connecting outdoors with indoors. The pots gave us endless joy and were often a topic of a conversation around the lunch table as they were flowering.

Now when I design and create my pot displays, I not only enjoy the process of creating them, but they take me back to my childhood. The early morning summer routine and seeing my mum watering the pots and sometimes snipping a few stems for the table bring such happy memories.

Anya Lautenbach is the author of several books on budget-friendly gardening, including *The Money-Saving Gardener* (DK, £16.99) and *The Money-Saving Garden Year* (DK, £16.99), and has propagated many of the plants in her garden from scratch.

Anya propagates many of the plants in her pot displays – it's a great way to reduce costs and increase your sense of achievement



△ Bright and breezy

Pots are like little gardens and this one, with its symphony of colours, textures and shapes, is easy to create. The red echinacea is the star, bringing height to the display and flowering until the first frost if deadheaded. Meanwhile, easy-to-grow *Stipa lessingiana* adds soft texture and moves in the breeze.

Erigeron karvinskianus is easy to grow from stem cuttings in spring and summer, and it will often bloom well into winter. *Muehlenbeckia complexa* and *Lysimachia nummularia* 'Aurea' give a lime-green lift and both can be grown from stem cuttings that will root easily in water. For a dynamic composition, arrange the plants before final planting in a container of peat-free compost.

Plants used

❶ **Necklace vine (*Muehlenbeckia complexa*)** *from stem cutting* x 1
❷ **Golden creeping Jenny (*Lysimachia nummularia* 'Aurea')** *from stem cutting* x 1
❸ **Mexican fleabane (*Erigeron karvinskianus*)** *from stem cuttings* x 2
❹ ***Echinacea purpurea* 'Red Rocket'** x 1
❺ **Lessing feather grass (*Stipa lessingiana*)** x 1
❻ **Pre-owned terracotta pot** (40cm x 30cm)

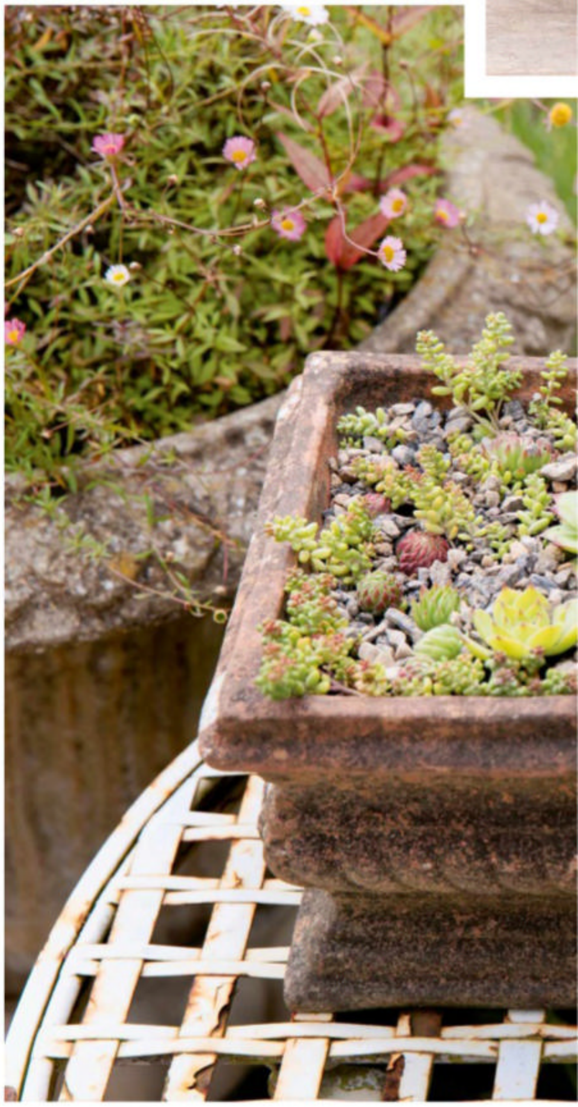
Propagation tip
To propagate *Muehlenbeckia complexa*, select the soft tip of stem 7-10cm long in late summer to early autumn, remove the lower leaves and stand in a glass of water out of direct sun. Stem cuttings will root in two to four weeks, ready for potting up.

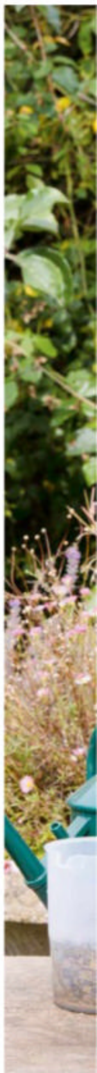
▷ Tender stars

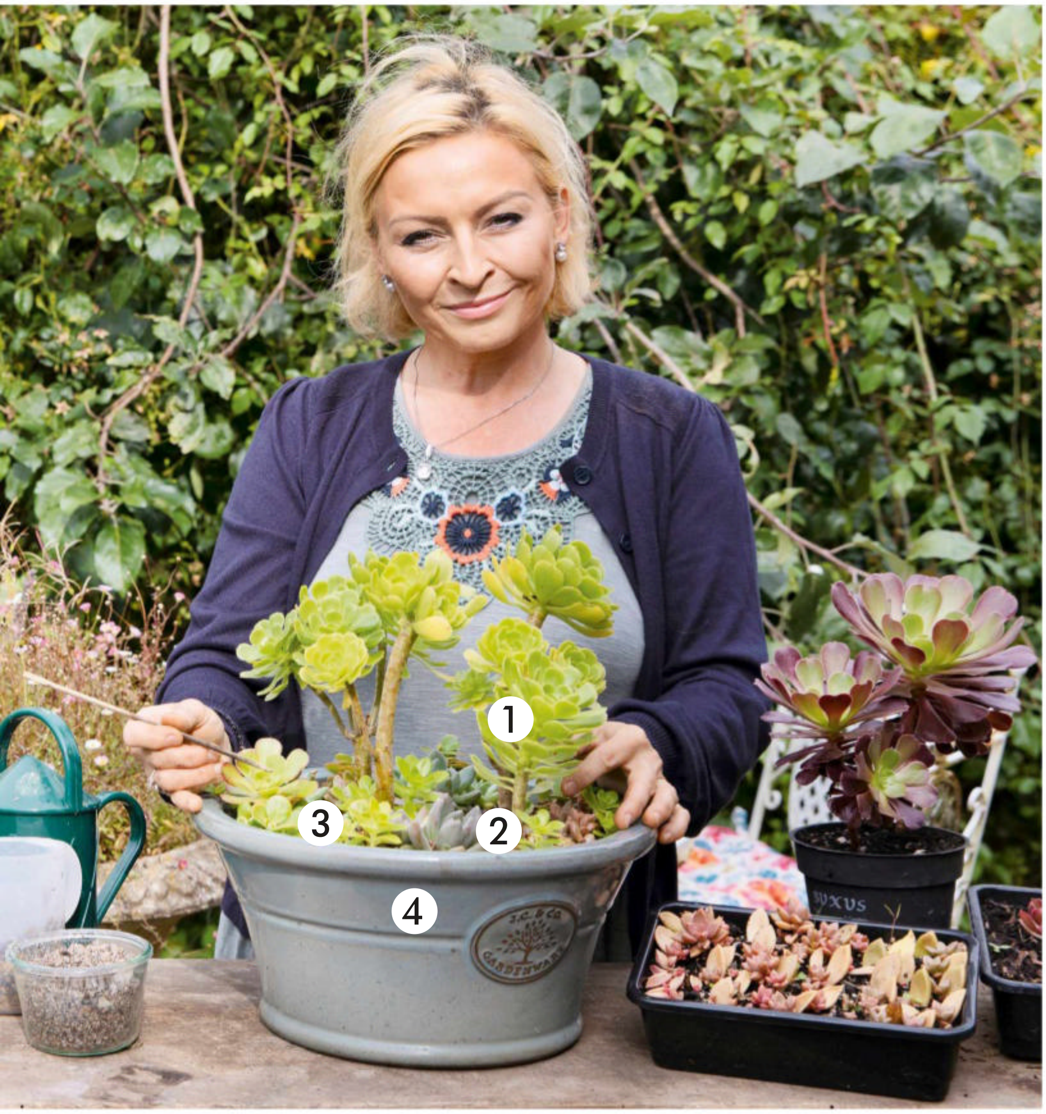
All the plants in this display are low maintenance and drought tolerant, making this a great solution for busy gardeners. Because all three plants are perennials, the container will keep on giving for years, without you spending any more money. The glossy, lime-green leaves of the aeoniums form perfectly shaped rosettes, making them a great contrast to the grey-green echeverias and the sedums, which are tinted red in summer.

This easy-care display can be positioned on a sunny patio during the summer months and combined with other potted plants, or it can be the focal point on a garden table – great for both contemporary and cottage garden styles. The aeoniums and echeverias are tender and need extra protection over winter, so move the container into a frost-free greenhouse or indoors in autumn.

All the plants are easy to propagate, which makes this a perfect option for money-conscious gardeners. Use a mix of peat-free compost and horticultural grit, adding further grit to the surface of the compost after planting.





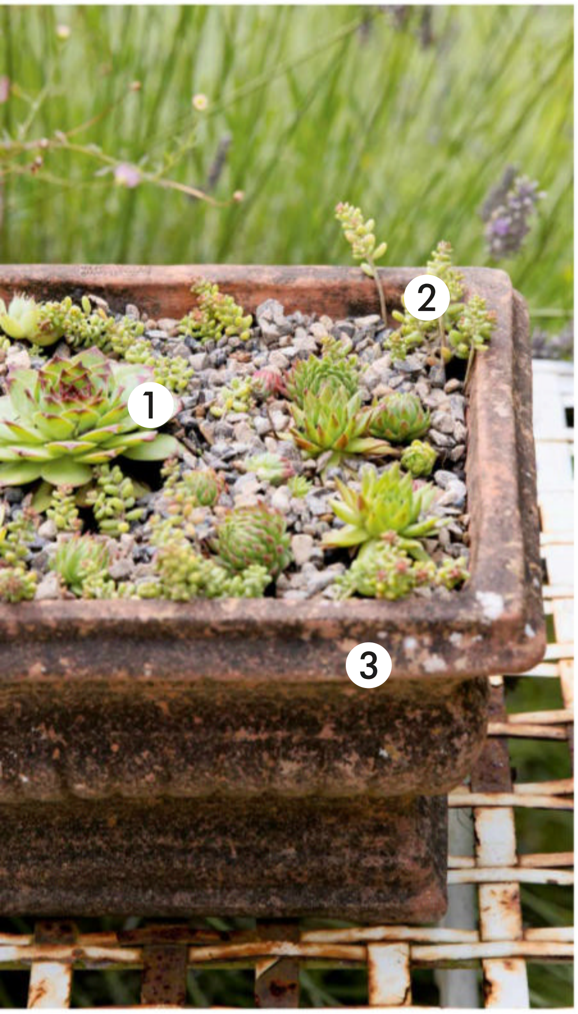


Plants used

- ❶ ***Aeonium castello-paivae*** **var. *sarae*** *from stem cuttings* x 2
- ❷ ***Echeveria humilis*** *from leaf cuttings* x 5-10
- ❸ ***Sedum tetractinum*** **'Coral Reef'** *from stem cuttings* x 5-10
- ❹ **Round glazed pot** (35cm x 17cm)

Propagation tip

Aeoniums can be propagated from a cutting of a stem topped with a leaf rosette. It will root in water all year.



◁ Winter hardy winner

Sempervivums and sedums are attractive, evergreen, succulent groundcover plants that can be grown in containers all year round. Both are very easy to propagate, drought resistant and require minimal care. What makes them even more useful is that they're hardy and can be grown outside all year. This lovely plant combination will satisfy every gardener and add interest to any space and style, no matter the size of your garden or your budget.

The creeping nature of *Sedum album* works so well when combined with the sempervivum, which forms attractive rosettes. The root system of both plants is very small, making it possible to plant both in most planters as long as they have plenty of holes in the base for the water to drain out. Plant them in a mix of peat-free compost and horticultural grit, with a layer of grit on the top.

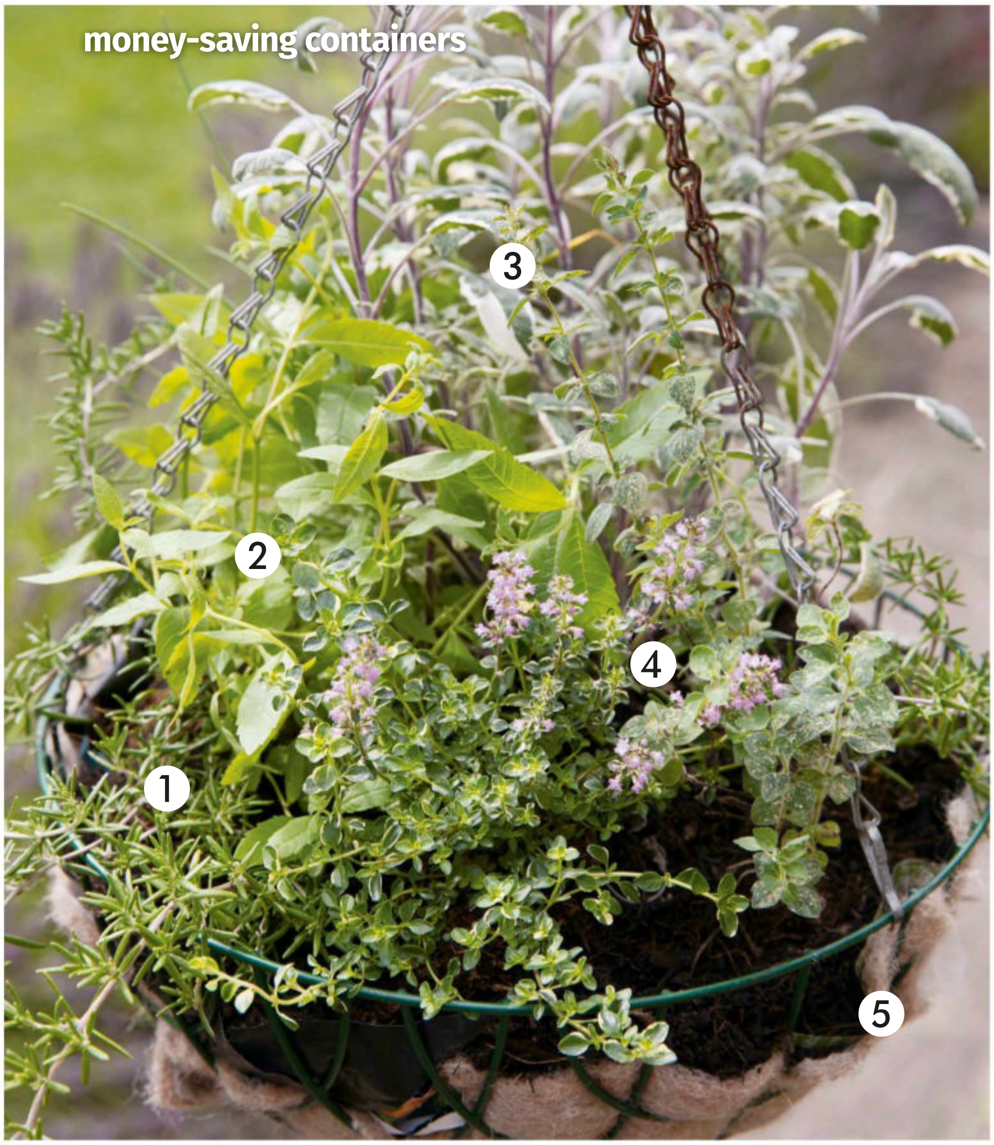
Both plants produce pollinator-friendly flowers in summer. So this is a win-win combination for any garden, no matter how big or small.

Plants used

- ❶ ***Sempervivum soboliferum*** *from leaf cuttings* x 5-10
- ❷ **White stonecrop (*Sedum album*)** *from stem cuttings* x 5-10
- ❸ **Pre-owned terracotta trough** (15cm x 27cm x 16cm)

Propagation tip

Sedum stems will root quickly into free-draining compost or soil during spring and summer, making it one of the easiest plants to propagate at home.



△ Hanging herbs

Many herbs grow well in hanging baskets, providing you with delicious harvests without taking up ground space. A herb basket is also quick and easy to assemble, lined with re-purposed plastic and water-absorbent jute, and filled with peat-free compost. Just make sure you have a hook or post to hang your basket from. Position it on a house wall or other warm, sheltered spot for protection in winter and for fresh growth into autumn.

Lots of herbs can be grown from seed or cuttings, and you can mix and match with plants from garden centres and plant sales. I grew my trailing rosemary from stem cuttings and added small potted plants of lemon verbena, thyme and sage.

Plants used

❶ **Trailing rosemary (*Salvia rosmarinus* Prostrata Group)** *from stem cuttings* x 3
❷ **Lemon verbena (*Aloysia citrodora*)** x 1
❸ **Variegated sage (*Salvia officinalis* 'Tricolor')** x 1
❹ **Pink-flowered broad-leaved thyme (*Thymus pulegioides* 'Foxley')** x 1
❺ **Hanging basket** (36cm x 17cm) lined with re-purposed plastic and water-absorbent jute

Propagation tip

Grow rosemary from stem cuttings – snip off a shoot just below a leaf in late summer, strip lower leaves and insert into a mix of peat-free compost and horticultural grit. Place in a bright location (not direct sun). It will root after a month.

Anya's tips for success

Propagation not only gives you more plants and saves you money, but it also brings an enormous sense of achievement and can be very grounding in a world of instant gratification and over-stimulation. It can easily be done in the home environment without any special equipment. And you can do it almost every single day of the year, because there are methods of propagation for every season.

The key things to remember are:

■ Cuttings can be taken from various parts of plants, including soft new shoots, semi-ripe and hardwood stems, as well as leaves and roots, depending on the plant. It's a great way to create numerous plants for free, plus it's fascinating watching the rooting process.

■ Keep cuttings out of direct sun, and if planted in compost, make sure they don't dry out. Cuttings need free-draining conditions, so mix horticultural grit into the compost, but they don't need too many nutrients so avoid using rich compost.

■ Division of clumping perennials can give almost instant-impact plants, as most will settle in quickly and flower in the same year.

■ Growing plants from seeds, and planting bulbs and tubers, are often simple ways of producing more plants at little cost. It's easy to forget that they're also propagation!

■ Most importantly, don't overthink it. It's good to understand the basics, such as which propagation method to use for which plant, but the main thing is not to be scared of giving it a try – a resilient plant may well root outside of the rules.

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How to grow the best salads

Find out how to get tasty harvests of six easy salad crops. Following his growing trials, Rich Heathcoate shares his expert growing and harvesting tips

PHOTOS: NEIL HEPWORTH

Rich Heathcote grows several types of lettuce, including romaine and butterhead

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In last month's issue, I shared the 26 different varieties of salad crops that I trialled and gave my top tips for the best ones to grow. I also included my favourites for taste, yield and ease of growing.

This month, I'm going to walk you through the best way to grow salad crops, including radishes and beetroot, to get the best harvests, showing you just how easy it can be to grow your own salad crops from seed. As a bonus, I'll also share the results of another trial I did on growing pea shoots. They're delicious in salads and as a topping for all kinds of dishes, but with so much choice of varieties, I wanted to narrow down which are the best peas to use for tasty, tender shoots.

Lettuce

To have salad leaves ready to harvest most months, I sow four times a year: February, April, June and September. For the best results, start them in modules under cover and plant out when the roots fill their individual cell. If sowing directly, don't oversow. Cover the seeds with a thin layer (less than 1cm) of compost or vermiculite and water in.

Smaller varieties of lettuce work well in pots, but need more watering. Whether in the ground or in pots, keep plants well watered in warm weather to slow bolting (going to flower), which can make the leaves bitter. If pigeons are a particular problem, lettuces may need netting.

Most lettuces can be harvested either by cutting the whole head off at the base, or as cut and come again. For the latter, just pick the outer leaves, leaving the heart of the plant intact to keep growing. If using as a cut-and-come-again crop, I pick up to half of the fully grown leaves to make sure the plant has a good amount to regenerate from. Try to harvest first thing in the morning when the leaves are at their plumpest, and plunge into a sink of cold water to wash them before drying and storing in a plastic bag or box in the fridge.

Thin out lettuce seedlings once they have their first set of true leaves

Harvest salad leaves regularly, as you need them, by cutting at the base

◀ Mixed baby leaf salad

Baby-leaf mixes are the quickest and easiest salads to grow, and you only need a tiny space in which to do it. Sowing times will depend on which varieties you are growing, so check your seed packet for the best time to sow.

This is the only salad crop that I never grow directly in the ground as I've found the small leaves are more susceptible to damage from the weather and pests. I sow the seeds in shallow terracotta trays in the greenhouse, but seed trays or plastic pots placed on a sunny windowsill will work just as well.

Scatter the seeds quite densely (1-2cm apart) and cover with 1cm of sieved compost. Keep the compost moist but not soaking – seedlings this close together are more susceptible to damping off. Once leaves reach around 10cm tall, harvest by gently holding a clump and cutting across the base of the stems with scissors.

As with full-sized lettuce, these leaves can wilt quickly, so try to harvest salad as you need it, just before eating or first thing in the morning. Leaving the leaves in a sink of cold water for half an hour to clean before drying in a towel or salad spinner also helps to keep them firm and crispy.

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Harvest cucumbers regularly to encourage further fruiting

◀ Cucumber

Cucumber plants are fast growing and tender, so it's important that they are not sown too early as frost will kill them. I sow mine mid-April under cover, one seed per 9cm pot, which are then potted on to increasingly larger pots once or twice before ending up in large pots at least 40cm in diameter. If growing outside, make sure you find varieties suitable for outdoor growing as these can thrive with less heat.

Cucumber plants need something to climb up, such as strong canes buried deep in the pots that you can tie the plant onto. I suspend twine from my greenhouse roof supports and tie the bottom to the base of the well-established plant. Twist the plants upwards around the string as they grow.

Cucumbers are made up of around 96 per cent water, so they are thirsty plants! Once established, give the plants a good soaking whenever the soil starts to dry out. Cucumbers will be ready to harvest from July, depending on when they were sown. The fruits grow very quickly, so pick them as soon as they are ready – from as little as 15cm. They'll keep in the fridge for a week and can be sliced and pickled to store for longer.

Radish

Radish seedlings can be started off in early spring in modules or sown direct. As they're fast growing, I sow them straight into the ground in any gaps between slower-growing crops. They can be sown until around September for regular harvests.

Drag a trowel along the ground to make a shallow drill and drop in seeds every 3-5cm. Cover the seeds and water in well. Although radishes are more drought resistant than other salad crops, keeping them well watered produces larger and more delicious harvests.

Once radishes have reached their full size (check the seed packet for guidance), hold the radish firmly and twist it out of the ground. I harvest them as needed, but they will store well in the fridge for a week or so.

Radishes are fast growing and can be harvested in as little as four weeks

Trial: perfect pea shoots

Pea shoots are tendrils picked from pea plants and eaten raw. Thin, delicate shoots are the best, and they taste delicious – a subtle pea flavour without the podding. Mature pea plants produce thicker stems, so I sow a crop just for shoots. Sow them 2cm deep in 15cm pots, in seed trays or in the ground, with 1-2cm spacing between seeds.

Sow under cover from February or outdoors from April, and harvest the young shoots when they have 4-6 pairs of leaves by snipping at the base. Sow every few weeks for a continuous harvest.

All four varieties I trialled germinated quickly and were easy to grow, but they varied in taste and texture. See below for a steer on varieties to try, but if you already have pea seeds it's worth giving them a go.

'Hurst Green Shaft' Delicate stemmed shoots and the leaves had good flavour.

'Kelvedon Wonder' Delicate stems with quite a strong, almost bitter, flavour.

'Meteor' These were very fast growing, which made the stems too thick to use as pea shoots, and the leaves had a distinctly average flavour.

Oskar Although the slowest growing (only by a few days), these produced the most delicious leaves with thin, crisp stems – perfect pea shoots!

Grow pea shoots for a tasty crop to add to salads

Beetroot

Beetroot is easy to grow over a long season. To have this vegetable for most of the year, sow some in modules under cover in February (these will be planted out in spring), some direct in the ground in April, and then again in June. Sow three seeds per module, or a thin row directly, and cover with 1-2cm of compost. Seedlings can be thinned to a 10cm spacing or grown in clusters of three to five beetroots to maximise space.

Beetroot is one of the least demanding vegetables that you can grow. It rarely suffers from significant pest damage and, once established, usually only needs watering during any prolonged dry spells.

Harvest beetroot by twisting it out of the ground once it reaches golf-ball size, choosing the largest to harvest first and leaving the others in the row or cluster to carry on growing. Try not to let any get larger than a tennis ball as they can get tough and woody.

Beetroot stores really well – keep them somewhere cool and dry for months over winter, when they can be roasted and added to warm winter salads.

Harvest beetroot while small for tender roots that are full of flavour

Sow spring onions regularly for repeat harvests through summer

▲ Spring onions

Spring onions are hardy, so can be sown directly into the ground in drills 2cm deep from March. They can be started earlier in modules but I find that the head start doesn't bring forward the harvest by more than a few days.

Spring onions tend to mature quite uniformly so, to avoid gluts, this is definitely a vegetable to sow little and often – a small row to fill gaps once a month from March to July works well. Sow the seed thinly and they won't need thinning out; spring onions will grow quite happily close together.

Once established, spring onions are fairly drought tolerant, but do keep them watered during prolonged dry spells of a week or more. The important thing is to keep the space either side of the spring onions free of weeds with regular hoeing, as they don't compete well with other plants.

Harvest little and often as needed, although they store well in the fridge for over a week. Lift by loosening the soil around the roots with a hand fork (being careful not to spear the onions) and pull gently from the base.

Keep the crops coming

Once you start growing your own delicious salads you won't want to stop! Here are some tips to prolong your harvesting window for these crops.

- **Extend the season** Use fleece or cloches to warm the soil in early spring and to protect young seedlings, allowing you to start your growing season earlier. Use them to protect salads at the other end of the year, too.
- **Use windowsills** or a greenhouse to start growing seeds in plug trays early in the season, so you'll have seedlings to plant out as soon as the soil is warm enough.
- **Intercrop** Make the most of your veg bed by spacing plants slightly closer than seed packets suggest and sowing smaller crops, such as spring onions, inbetween rows of bigger ones.
- **Sow successionally** Don't wait to harvest a crop before sowing the next batch as this wastes weeks of growing time. A few weeks before harvest, sow the next crop in plug trays ready to plant out as soon as you have picked the earlier crops.
- **Try cut and come again** Most salads can be treated as cut and come again, and some lettuces will regenerate after you've cut the whole head, as long as you leave the roots in the ground.
- **Look for varieties** that can grow in colder temperatures and use these to start your growing season earlier.

Get crops started early by sowing indoors in spring

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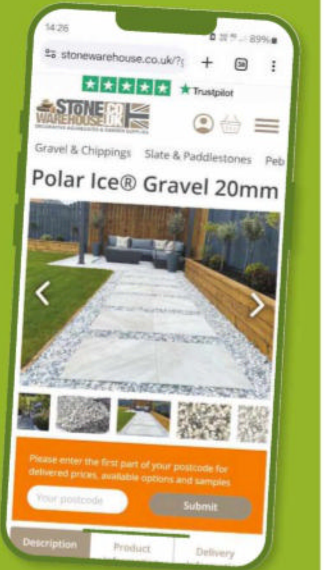
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Growing THE GOOD LIFE

With summer reaching its peak, there's a glut of crops on the allotment. **Sara Ward** is busy storing fruit and veg, as well as planning ahead

PHOTOS JASON INGRAM

The harvests are now coming in thick and fast. A quick check of last year's records show that we gathered 150 per cent more in July than June; a significant contribution being greengages on the allotment.

The warmth of the city often means that crops ripen slightly earlier than in other parts of the country and as soon as we spot the squirrels starting to snack on them, it's time to pick the lot. I have a net on a pole to help me reach the higher fruit and literally pick as much as I can carry home – a bucket of 5kg in each hand.

While fruit and veg are on the up, eggs are on the down as several of our hens are broody. Believing it's time to hatch their eggs for chicks, they stop laying and settle in the nest box for weeks at a time. So committed are they to keeping eggs warm, they only leave the nest for 10 minutes a day for a quick meal and comfort break.

> *"I have a net on a pole to **reach the higher fruit** and pick as much as I can carry home"*

Sarah plants her early potatoes in mid-late March so she can enjoy her first crops this month

Time for tomatoes

Now is the time of year to talk tomatoes! Hopefully, with regular watering and a good amount of sun, they are starting to grow strong and tall. Do tie cordon tomatoes in to a sturdy support. We use bamboo canes, to prevent the stems from bending and breaking.

Pinch out the sideshoots of taller vine or cordon varieties, to encourage concentration on developing flowers and trusses of fruit rather than big bushes of foliage. And start feeding tomatoes as the fruit starts to swell – we use a feed enriched with liquid seaweed, diluted in our watering can, and feed at soil level to keep leaves dry, which reduces the risk of blight taking hold on wet foliage.

Bringing in the harvest

I always try to grow unusual crops and particularly love the purple varieties of peas and beans; the colourful pods are a beautiful contrast to the soft-green foliage, making them easier to spot as they grow. Keep an eye on mangetout peas; translated from French it means 'eat all', so we want to pick the pods while they're young. Harvest them when they're still small and tender, with crunchy pod cases, before you see the peas developing in their pods.

Other fresh veg we are harvesting now, such as carrots, peppers and radishes, can be eaten straightaway in crunchy salads or spicy stir-fries.

Waste not, want not

As crops start to reach their peak, it's good to store anything that we can't eat immediately. Plums and the like can be gently washed and frozen whole, complete with their stones, then when it's time to cook them, be that for jam or a pie, simmer gently with a little water in a covered pan until soft. Allow to cool and then pick out the stones by hand; it's so

> *“I love pears, peeled, cored and quartered, poached in spiced syrup and stored in glass jars”*

ABOVE Pick mangetout regularly while they are young, before the peas develop
BELOW Eat apples fresh from the tree and store the rest for consuming during winter

much easier than trying to halve and stone 10kg of fruit before freezing.

The first few cooking apples will last quite a while in the fridge or they can be made into a fruity chutney as an accompaniment for summer barbecues. Larger hauls of apples benefit from a production line of prep to preserve them perfectly. I also love pears peeled, cored and quartered, poached in spiced syrup then stored in large glass jars for winter.

Beetroot can be pickled and packed away for colder months; it may take a while to process and pot up all our harvests, but it's well worth it.

Looking ahead

Although there's lots of lovely fresh veg available now, we continue to plan ahead. It's time to transplant baby brassicas to the cleared broad beans bed at the allotment. Broccoli, cabbage and Brussels sprouts really benefit from the nitrogen that the legume crops fix in the soil. Remember that small cabbage plants can grow really big, so 30cm spacing between plants is a minimum.

I always cover the brassicas at the allotment with either chicken wire or a netted cage to keep the pigeons off – they really do love to snack on any leaves they can reach. Regular watering will also help these young plants thrive in their new location.

The first wild blackberries can be ready to pick in July. We may spend hours cutting back and digging out brambles, but once they start fruiting all is forgiven! Keep a couple of food bags in your pocket when you go out for a walk, as you never know what you'll find, but always remember to only pick fruit that is growing above knee height, especially on towpaths and walkways where dogs may have visited.

ABOVE Gently lever out root veg such as carrots with a trowel when golf-ball size **LEFT** Remove tomato sideshoots so the plant can put its energy into growing fruit

JULY Jobs

✓ **Tie in** grapevines to support wires and remove excess leaves to allow sunlight to ripen the developing fruit.

✓ **Dig** up the last of the first early potatoes, these are lovely boiled as soon as possible after harvest, and served with butter and fresh herbs. It also releases a bed for fast-growing spinach and chard.

✓ **Harvest** summer squashes regularly – this helps the plant produce more flowers for subsequent pickings. Squashes can get thirsty, so regular watering with a liquid feed will help the fruit to swell nicely.

✓ **Water** sweetcorn frequently to help the pollinated kernels swell on the cobs. I keep an eye on these as allotment foxes seem to take a fancy to them.

✓ **Weed** around leeks. Although they won't be ready for quite a while, weeding with a long-handled hoe stops unwanted plants competing for precious water in the dryer months.

✓ **Tie in** the loose stems of runner beans. They naturally love to climb, but need help finding and winding around the support or pole. As always, regular watering sends them shooting for the sky.

✓ **Continue** to pick salads, either whole lettuce heads or mixed leaves. While wonderful straightaway, lettuce leaves can keep well in the fridge for a few days with a sheet of damp kitchen paper in a sealed plastic bag.

✓ **Pick** red peppers if they are ready, but just remember that homegrown varieties are often more delicate than those imported and may not store as well. Enjoy them freshly picked from the plant.

✓ **Stop** cutting asparagus. After a lovely season of homegrown asparagus, it's time to stop harvesting it and allow the spears to grow to full height and produce ferns. This enables a good few months of photosynthesis when the delicate fronds can convert light energy from the sun then store it as food in the crowns and roots below ground, all ready for a new harvest next year. Do provide support for asparagus plants during this process to prevent stems from flopping and getting damaged.

Hoe inbetween vegetables such as young leeks to prevent weeds competing for food and water

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NEXT MONTH Sara explains her watering methods during the holidays, extracts honey and forages for sloes

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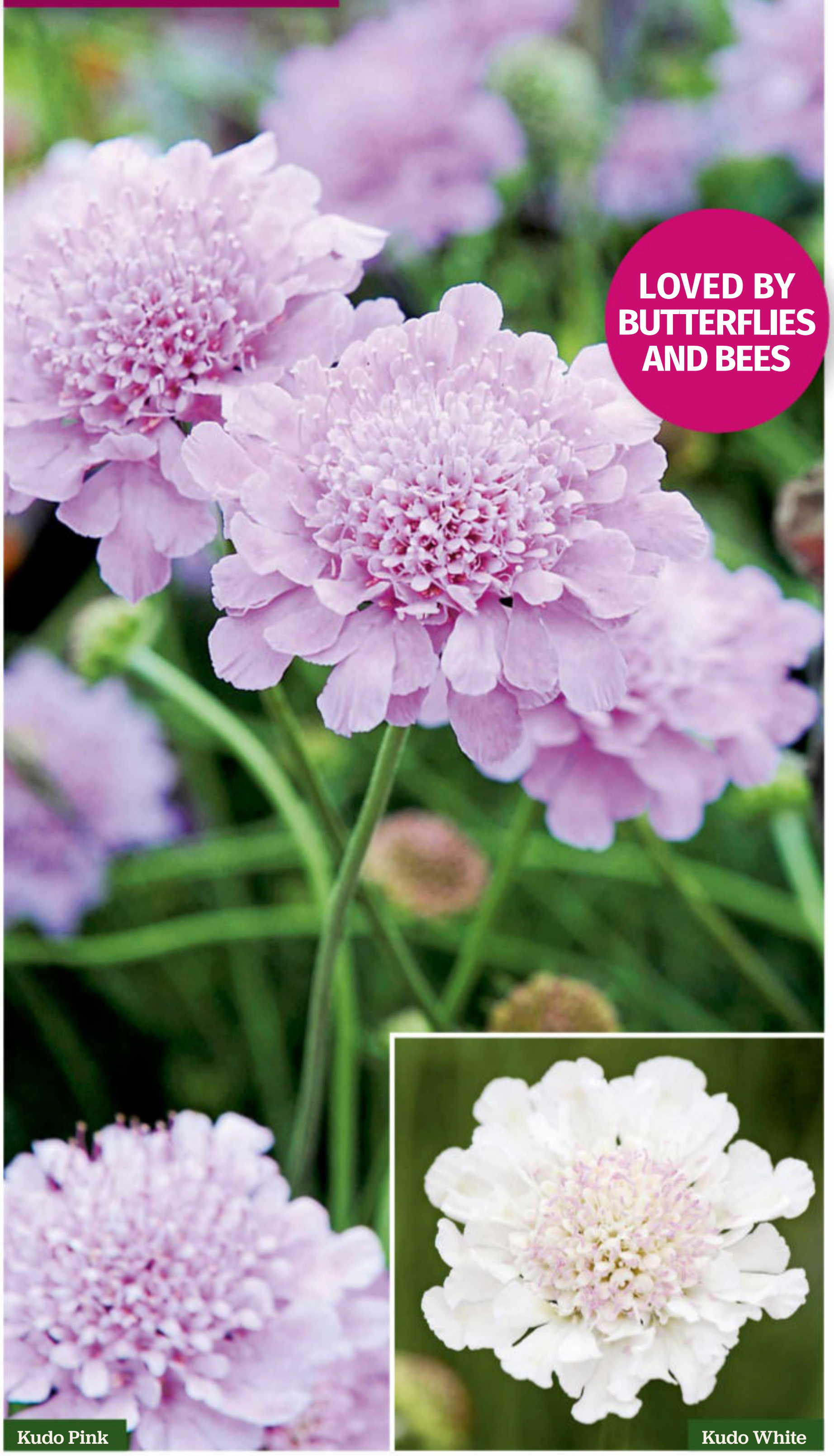

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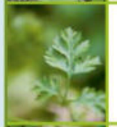
July

Growing guide

Fill any gaps with catch crops of quick-growing salad leaves, or prepare for winter veg

Sow indoors 🟪 **Plant/sow outdoors** 🟩 **Harvest** 🟧

Key crops for July	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Tips
Beetroot Just as much a food superhero as kale. The darker the colour, the richer in protective, good-for-you compounds.			🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩🟧	🟩🟧	🟧	🟧				**Tips** Dig in plenty of garden compost before sowing to enrich the soil. Water regularly to help the roots swell. **Sow** ↓ 2.5cm deep **Final spacing** ↔ 15cm apart ⤢ 23-30cm between rows
Calabrese This brassica is loaded with healthy phytochemicals, including kaempferol, which has anti-inflammatory benefits.			🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩🟧	🟧	🟧	🟧			**Tips** Use fine-mesh netting to protect from cabbage butterflies. After harvesting, water to encourage a second crop. **Sow** ↓ 2cm deep **Final spacing** ↔ 45cm apart ⤢ 45cm between rows
Chinese cabbage Supplying soluble and insoluble fibre to benefit digestive health, these low-calorie leaves are also a source of phytonutrients.				🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩🟧	🟩🟧	🟧	🟧	🟧		**Tips** The roots are shallow, so water little and often. Harvest the head but leave the stump and another smaller cabbage should form. **Sow** ↓ 2cm deep **Final spacing** ↔ 45cm apart ⤢ 45cm between rows
 **Coriander** Rich in potassium, folate and vitamin C, the leaves add tangy flavour to salads and complement fish, meat and vegetables.				🟩	🟩	🟩🟧	🟩🟧	🟩🟧	🟧	🟧			**Tips** Coriander likes free-draining but moist soil. Sow small batches every few weeks for leaves all summer. Harvest the seeds too. **Sow** ↓ 1cm deep **Final spacing** ↔ 15cm apart ⤢ 30cm between rows
Corn salad (lamb's lettuce) Packed with beta-carotene, which helps to support immunity, promote eye health and maintain a youthful complexion.	🟧	🟧	🟧	🟧	🟩🟧	🟩🟧	🟧	🟧	🟧	🟧	🟧	🟧	**Tips** Sow every few weeks for a continuous supply all year round. Cover with fleece or cloches to keep plants cropping over winter. **Sow** ↓ 1cm deep **Final spacing** ↔ 10cm apart ⤢ 15cm between rows
Florence fennel Cooked or eaten raw, fennel has a mild aniseed flavour and is full of bone-friendly nutrients such as potassium and calcium.			🟪	🟪		🟧	🟩🟧	🟩🟧	🟩🟧	🟧			**Tips** If you sow seeds now, rather than in spring, the plants are less likely to bolt. Earth up soil around the bulbs as they develop. **Sow** ↓ 3cm deep **Final spacing** ↔ 30cm apart ⤢ 30cm between rows
French beans – dwarf Providing carotenoids such as beta-carotene, lutein and zeaxanthin, the levels increase when the beans are cooked.			🟪	🟪	🟩	🟩🟧	🟩🟧	🟧	🟧	🟧			**Tips** Support with twiggy sticks. Lay a thick layer of garden compost around plants to suppress weeds and hold moisture in the soil. **Sow** ↓ 5cm deep **Final spacing** ↔ 15cm apart ⤢ 23cm between rows
Spinach High in protective antioxidants such as polyphenols, spinach may benefit the liver, especially when eaten raw.			🟪🟩	🟩🟧	🟩🟧	🟩🟧	🟩🟧	🟩🟧	🟩🟧	🟧	🟧		**Tips** Keep plants well watered in hot weather to prevent bolting. Cover with fine netting to protect leaves from insects and birds. **Sow** ↓ 2.5cm deep **Final spacing** ↔ 20cm apart ⤢ 45cm between rows
Swiss chard Vitamin C and magnesium are found in the leaves, while the crunchy stems are high in potassium.			🟧	🟩🟧	🟩🟧	🟩🟧	🟩🟧	🟩🟧	🟩🟧	🟧	🟧		**Tips** Sow in moist, free-draining soil and keep plants well watered in summer. Harvest leaves regularly to encourage more to grow. **Sow** ↓ 2.5cm deep **Final spacing** ↔ 30cm apart ⤢ 45cm between rows
Turnips Source of protective flavonoids, including quercetin, that guard against UV damage and act as natural antihistamines.			🟩	🟩	🟩🟧	🟩🟧	🟩🟧	🟩🟧	🟧	🟧	🟧	🟧	**Tips** Sow in partial shade and keep the soil moist to encourage germination. Start harvesting baby roots when 5cm in diameter. **Sow** ↓ 2cm deep **Final spacing** ↔ 25cm apart ⤢ 30cm between rows

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Gardeners' Question Time

Our experts tackle your queries, which include pruning pear trees, dealing with sticky bugs and getting amaryllis to bloom in summer

Kirsty Wilson
Kirsty is Head of Gardens at Balmoral Castle and is a presenter on BBC2's *Beechgrove Garden*

Bob Flowerdew
Bob is an organic gardener and a radio presenter, as well as the author of dozens of gardening books

Anne Swithinbank
A keen fruit, vegetable and house-plant grower, Anne was formerly the glasshouse supervisor at RHS Garden Wisley

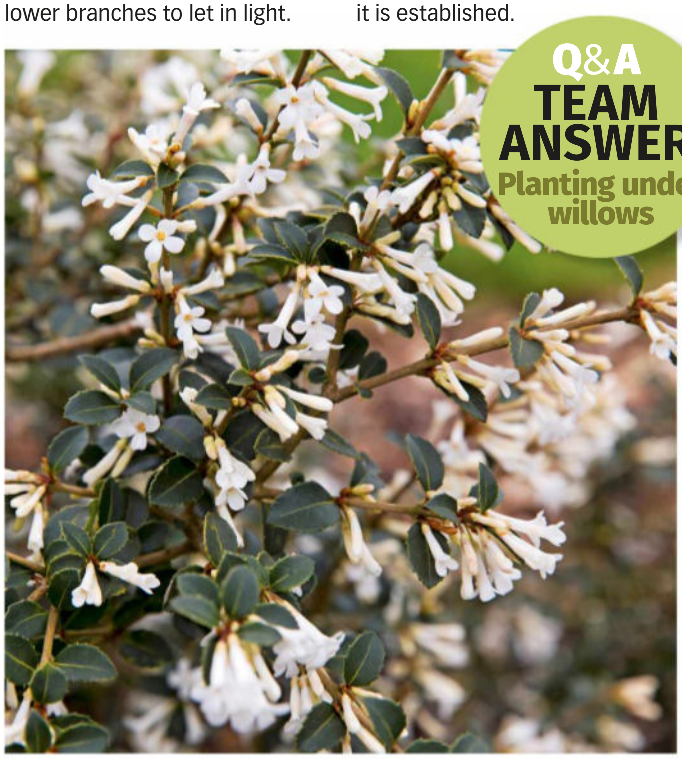
Q Which shrubs can be planted under two large willow trees in clay soil?

Terry Hoye, Essex

A BOB SAYS You don't specify weeping willows, so I assume they're natives and large hungry and thirsty competitors. Willows, if self-sown, indicate a moist site, but they're likely to have left the soil drier, poorer and shady. Plus, a clay soil will make it a hard place for many shrubs.

First, prune the willows' lower branches to let in light. If the area tends to be dry, choose from: aucuba, berberis, osmanthus, *Prunus laurocerus*, ribes, rubus, skimmia or symphoricarpos. If it is wet, try: cornus, osmanthus, symphoricarpos, viburnum or rubus, and plant your shrubs on slight mounds. But whether your site is wet or dry, it's crucial to water and feed any new shrub until it is established.

Q&A TEAM ANSWER
Planting under willows



The fragrant *Osmanthus delavayi* thrives in dappled shade

Asplenium does well in partial shade and copes with dry soil

A KIRSTY SAYS The soil under the willow trees is likely to be dry, meaning shrubs could be tricky but here are two alternative ideas. *Asplenium scolopendrium* is an attractive and versatile evergreen fern. It will add vertical interest towards the front of a partially shaded border or under established trees and shrubs. Each spring, new tongue-like fronds unfurl, creating upright clumps, which look great dotted through a woodland floor. It should work well under your willow trees as it tends to be tolerant of dry soil once established.

Also try *Epimedium franchetii* 'Brimstone Butterfly', which is a clump-forming perennial that reaches a height of 60cm. The stems have three long, narrow leaves that emerge tinged with pink, maturing to a mid-green. In spring, it forms branched spikes up to 45cm long of spidery flowers with pale-yellow petals.

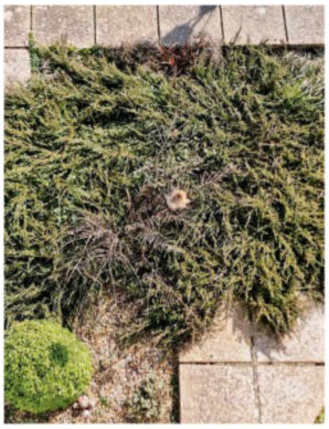
Q How can I care for a 50-year-old hoya?

Beccy Sanders, North Yorkshire

A ANNE SAYS In the forest margins of India, south China and Myanmar, *Hoya carnosa* is a vigorous climber. Semi-epiphytic and stem-rooting, plants tend to have small ground-root systems in proportion to their size. They can live for many years in the same pot but the leaves will eventually discolour.

During summer, before or just after flowering, pot on into a slightly larger pot. Use an open mix of peat-free compost with added grit and bark-based orchid compost. The trellis in your picture was too small, so instead create a new, taller four-cane tepee with the tops tied in. Coil long stems around this, tying them in as you go. You can prune hoya but leave the flowering spurs in place. Remember to water the plant, but let the surface dry out a little before the next watering. Take cuttings too.

Renew old hoya plants with cuttings from healthy stems



Dwarf spreading juniper grows well in dry, free-draining soils

Q What is this low-growing plant and will it survive being relocated?

Abi, East Sussex

A KIRSTY SAYS This looks like a dwarf spreading juniper. Garden junipers can develop in two ways, either as a columnar form that creates architectural structure in the garden, or as a spreading form that works well as ground cover – like the variety that you have.

Juniper is hardy and drought-resistant, making it a good choice for free-draining soils, dry regions and coastal areas. It prefers a site with full sun or light dappled shade. Move it in October or late March, when the soil is beginning to warm up.

During the first two years after replanting it may need regular watering help it settle in, particularly in dry and hot spells. Once established, it can cope without watering, except in prolonged heatwaves.

Wild garlic spreads easily through its seeds and bulbs

Q Is there a selective herbicide suitable for a wild garlic infestation?

Phill Heath, by email

A BOB SAYS There may be herbicides that would kill the wild garlic, but this may damage other plants, and I don't recommend using one.

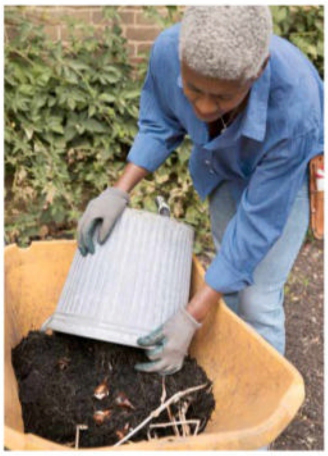
Pouring boiling water carefully over the garlic leaves would eliminate much of it, but won't stop new plants coming from seed. Fabric mulch would seal all regrowth underneath thus killing off existing bulbs due to lack of light, but it would be difficult to cover plants around other plants, and if removed it would not prevent new plants coming from seed. Instead, buy a large load of inexpensive mulching material, say council or mushroom compost, and regularly apply this carefully, flattening the garlic leaves underneath so they die in the dark and bury seeds too deep to allow them to emerge. Replenish the compost regularly.

Q What to do with a bulb lasagne after flowering?

Anne Green, Ross-shire

A KIRSTY SAYS Planting different layers of bulbs with slightly different flowering periods such as crocuses and tulips in the same container creates a long succession of blooms. After the plants finish flowering, allow the foliage to die back, then either leave the bulbs in the pot or dig them up and store in a cool, dry place to then plant in borders in autumn.

In the pot, they probably won't flower as well in year two due to the exhausted compost. The same goes if you plant the whole thing in the garden as they will be surrounded by the same compost. To plant them in the garden, split the bulbs and plant them individually or pot them up with new compost for next year.



Give old potted bulbs a new life by planting in the garden

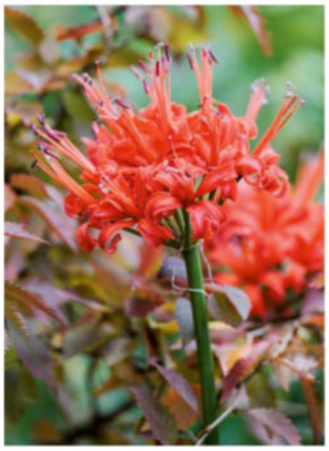
Q Is it possible to get amaryllis to flower in August for a show?

Ian G, by email

A ANNE SAYS All the information regarding amaryllis (*Hippeastrum*) points to an autumn-winter planting and bulbs are usually only available then. After flowering, they can be kept healthy and growing until summer, when watering stops and the bulbs go dormant, ready to start again in autumn.

However, some of my amaryllis have flowered in summer. Instead of drying them off by withholding water, I let them stay evergreen and so they start flowering when they feel like it, often in summer. This is not much help to you though, because you need them to perform on a specific date. If your existing bulbs are dormant now, try planting and watering them 6-8 weeks before your target date to see what happens.

For future shows, grow cultivars of Guernsey lily (*Nerine sarniensis*) or put the costly, but worth it, blood lily (*Haemanthus coccineus*) on your wish list.

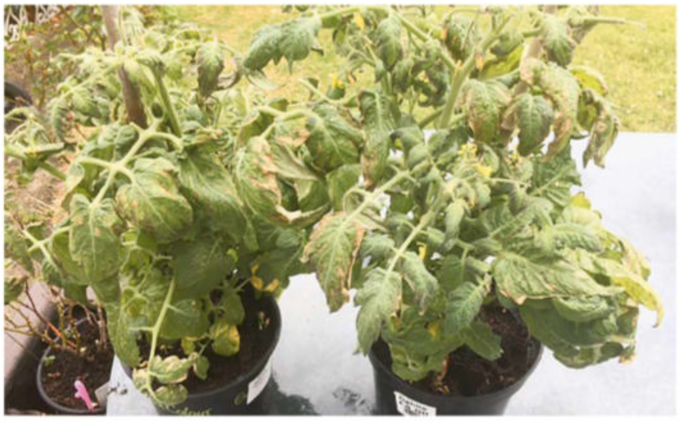


***Nerine sarniensis* is a good option for August displays**

Q Why do my tomato plants have curly leaves with brown patches?

Dennis, by email

A ANNE SAYS Your plants look as though they need potting on and feeding. The dense growth suggests that they are bush-type tomatoes bred for container growing, so pot them on into slightly larger pots, using a compost containing or mixed with some John Innes no 2.



Patio tomatoes have a distinct and compact habit

PHOTOS: SARAH CUTTLE; PAUL DEBOIS; GETTY/EMER1940; JASON INGRAM

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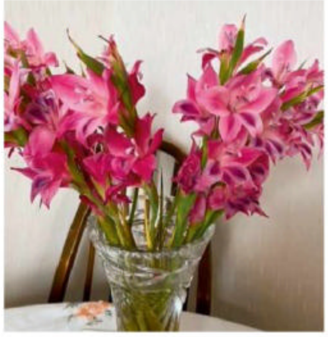


Nanus gladioli are dwarf varieties with dainty blooms

Q Are these flowers irises or gladioli?

Raymund O'Neill, by email

A ANNE SAYS Gladiolus and iris belong to the plant family *Iridaceae*, but your flowers are gladioli. Their markings suggest membership of the Nanus Group, much loved for their slender spikes of dainty flowers, perfect for cutting. The closest cultivar I can find to yours is 'Vulcano', but they are all lovely.

Q What easy plants for year-round interest?

Felice, London

A BOB SAYS Most plants are low maintenance, it's the year-round interest you want that is difficult to find. Shrubs require little care until they get too large then need pruning while herbaceous clumps only need tidying in autumn. Also try masses of bulbs for spring, summer and winter flowering in your south-east-facing garden.

In the right conditions, bulbs such as tulips need little care

Q Can I save my six-year-old dying ceanothus?

Patricia Ridley, by email

A BOB SAYS *Ceanothus*, or Californian lilacs, are not very robust shrubs and are generally not long lived, 15 years often being their maximum lifespan. Even so, six years is very brief.

Both deciduous and evergreen forms dislike being cold, wet at the roots or exposed to very windy conditions, and your symptoms indicate that this plant has had a hard time, which in turn may be causing mildew or another infection.

Ironically, ceanothus also dislike being too dry, so yours may respond to a trim, water and a high-potash feed. However, I fear it is too far gone and will not recover well enough to put on a good display again so, reluctantly, I suggest you dump this specimen and plant another in a different, more suitable place, which would be against a warm, sunny wall.

***Ceanothus* varieties need sun, shelter and free-draining soil**

Camellias, hard pruned in March, should resprout well

Q How should camellias be pruned?

Helen, Staffordshire

A KIRSTY SAYS Generally, camellias need an annual trim to maintain their shape after flowering in May or June, removing the tips of the outer branches and taking out diseased or inner branches to improve air flow and plant health.

If they have outgrown their desired position and need a hard pruning, then do this in March. It may be necessary to remove most of the shrub's branches and foliage to 12-15cm from the ground. In mid-summer, thin out any new shoots, cutting them back when they are about 25-30cm to the main stems. This will guarantee healthier branches in future, but it will be a couple of years before your camellias flower well again.

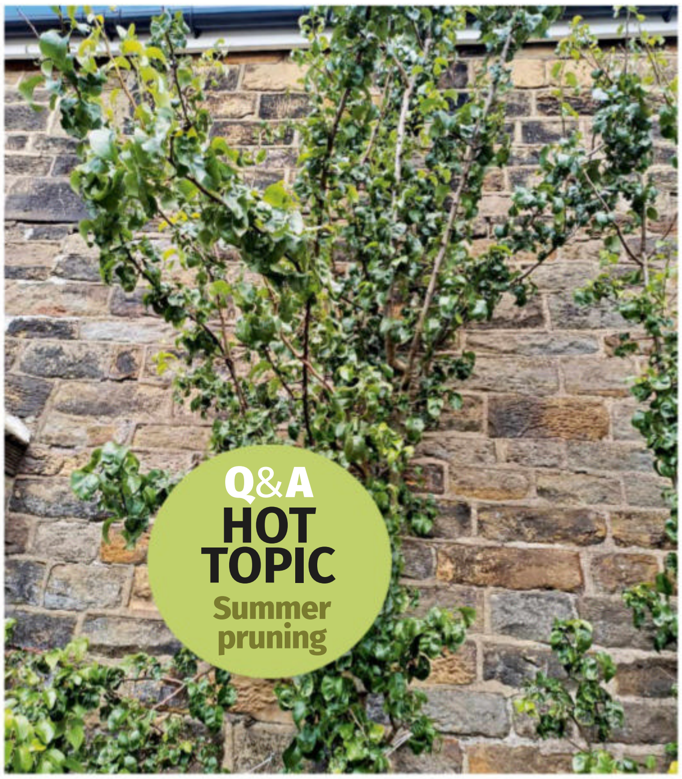
Q Help! Our pear trees have spotted leaves and grow like crazy

Lynn, West Yorkshire

A ANNE SAYS With fruit trees, the best plan is to start out with an aim or vision for their shape. In the open, they might make shapely trees but against a wall, are usually trained into restricted forms such as cordons, espaliers or fans.

There is not enough space for your two (below) to be trained as fans side by side, so use images of dwarf pyramids as a guide. These are usually not wall-trained but by using a saw in winter and secateurs in late summer, you could reduce the upright stems and trim back the side stems.

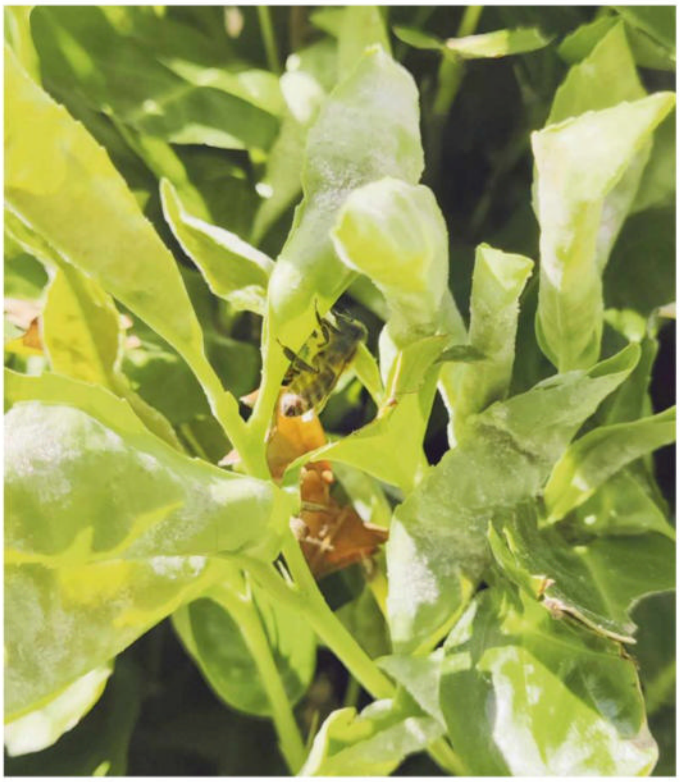
Take a couple of years to do this, so you don't shock the trees, then trim them twice a year to maintain their shape. Hopefully, this will stop their upward trajectory and encourage better fruiting. The black spots could be pear scab, so dispose of infected fallen leaves and fruit.



Pruned and trained, pears will put their energy into fruiting

PHOTOS: SARAH CUTTLE; TIM SANDALL

Q&A gardeners' question time



Keep laurels in good health to help prevent disease and damage

Q Have leafcutter bees caused this damage to our laurel hedge?

Rebecca West, West Yorkshire

A BOB SAYS You don't say which laurel, but from the smaller soft-green leaves I think it is the Portugal laurel, *Prunus lusitanica*. The cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) is thicker leaved so more robust – if it is this, it is probably too wet at the roots and/or too heavily shaded.

Regarding the leaf damage: leafcutter bees take precise notched segments from the |leaf edges so I think the bees you've spotted are instead seeking sustenance from the white powder. This powdery coating is likely a mildew that could be causing all the leaf damage, but it could also be a shot-hole infection.

In any case, it's more aesthetically annoying than a serious risk to the hedge. Try to encourage healthier growth by watering your hedge well with added seaweed solution and or a liquid feed, and give it a wood ash dressing.

Q Can I buy scented outdoor begonias?

Joanne Jenkins, by email

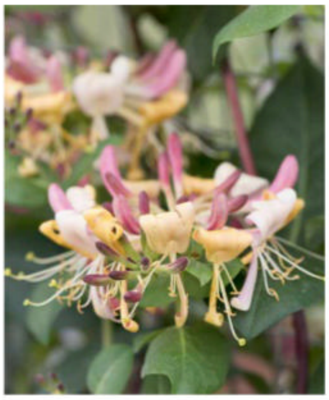
A ANNE SAYS Hardy *Begonia grandis* subsp. *evansiana* opens pink or white flowers in late summer on plants 30cm tall and dies back to small tubers for winter. The blooms are described as fragrant but I struggle to detect it. Try edulis.co.uk or hardysplants.co.uk. The tender, tuberous *B. amphioxus* 'Angelique' and similar scented ones need winter protection.

Q Help! The middle of my honeysuckle is brown and has no leaves

Dawn, by email

A KIRSTY SAYS Honeysuckle flowers better in a sunny place, although a lightly shaded position will encourage a healthier, greener plant. It sounds as if your plant needs more water.

Also try mulching it with garden compost or well-rotted garden manure to help retain moisture, and give it a feed.



Feed and water honeysuckle for plenty of fragrant flowers

Q How do I deal with white sticky bugs on my citrus?

Marion Hood, Middlesex

A ANNE SAYS Citrus plants attract scale insects and mealy bugs, which are hard to control. Both of these are sap suckers, which secrete stickiness. Prune first to remove some infested growth. Placing the plants outside was a good move, as the mealy bugs are glasshouse pests and prefer a protected environment. The adults are females and lay their eggs under a sticky mealiness.

Try a biological control such as a predatory ladybird larvae or parasitic wasps – more effective under glass than in homes or outdoors. I've eliminated mealy bug on plants by spraying with a plant Invigorator daily for the first two weeks and then every few days for a further two. Or try the same using organic sprays.

Water citrus in pots regularly to maintain their health

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Enjoy a home screen that displays the apps and functions you use most frequently and have peace of mind knowing that as you navigate your phone, information is intuitively laid out and options are clearly labelled. With the touch of a special 'home button', you can return to the home screen immediately. Additionally, text is always large and readable, icons are big and bright and touch areas have been supersized to ensure you won't miss a thing. This phone feels just right! As you would expect, this Samsung smartphone is fast and powerful, with an all-day battery and plenty of storage. Combined with the super sharp LCD display, beautifully balanced audio, and overall sleek design, it's both easy- to-use and high-performing.

Specifications:

- 6.7" LCD Touch Screen
- Size: H 16.8cm, W 7.7cm, D 0.88cm
- 4G (Compatible With All Networks)
- WiFi, Bluetooth, NFC, GPS Enabled
- 64GB Storage
- Add Storage With A Micro SD Card
- All-Day Battery
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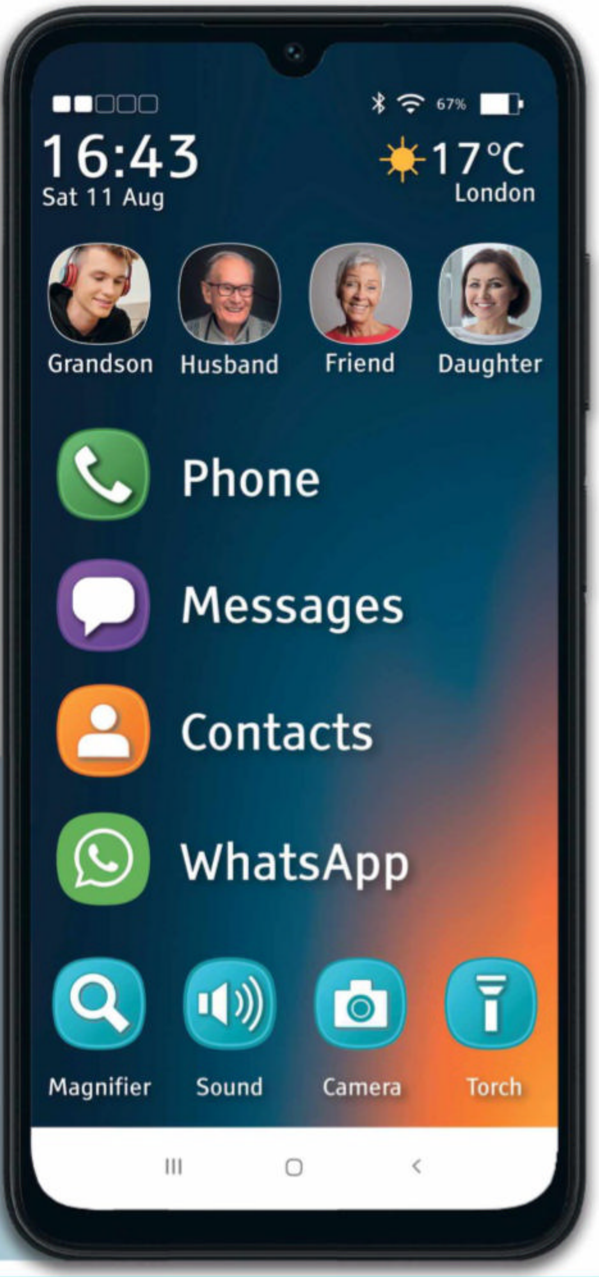
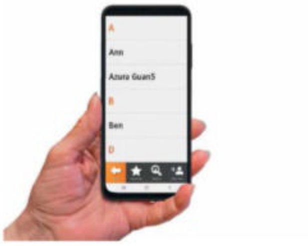
- Headphone Port
- Android 14
- 2 Year Samsung Warranty



- Apps and functions are displayed in an easy scrollable list

- Clear layouts for ease-of-use



- Assign 4 contacts to the home screen and contact them easily

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Puzzles

Take a break from the garden with these brainteasers

Step by step

By changing one letter each time to make a new word, can you transform LILY into PADS in six steps or less?

LILY
_ _ _ _
_ _ _ _
_ _ _ _
_ _ _ _
_ _ _ _
_ _ _ _
PADS

Space invaders

Here are six common garden weeds – but numbers have replaced the letters. Can you crack the code?

25 18 20 20 6 3 2 14 3 6 20 1

26 22 16 26 14 4 20 20 11

26 12 21 26 22 25 18 3 9 9

25 18 12 21 6 11 9 20 2

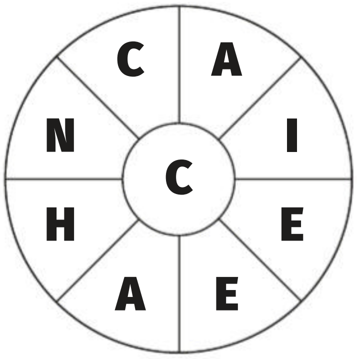
25 18 12 21 6 11 20 2 11 20 18

22 12 18 9 20 1 3 16 2

Word wheel

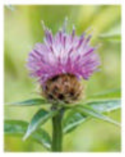
Make as many five-letter words as you can using letters from the wheel (excluding proper nouns), all containing the letter in the centre. Target: 7

Now use all the letters in the wheel to spell out a plant that blooms all summer



Wild beauties

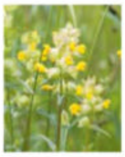
Here are four plants you might see in a summer wildflower meadow – but they've got a bit muddled. Can you match the correct botanical and common name to each picture?



SUCCISA PRATENSIS
YELLOW RATTLE

____

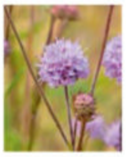
____



CENTAUREA NIGRA
COMMON TOADFLAX

____

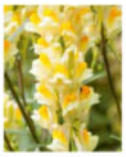
____



LINARIA VULGARIS
COMMON KNAPWEED

____

____



RHINANTHUS MINOR
DEVIL'S BIT SCABIOUS

____

____

Secret six

Use each letter in the grid once to answer the clues

E	M	R	T	R	H
C	G	D	R	E	A
T	N	T	C	I	B
R	E	I	N	H	R
L	R	S	T	Y	A
O	P	H	R	O	U

_ _ _ _ _ _ *Greenhouse pest*
_ _ _ _ _ _ *Salad favourite*
_ _ _ _ _ _ *Soft stone fruit*
_ _ _ _ _ _ *Type of bee*
_ _ _ _ _ _ *Potato disease*
_ _ _ _ _ _ *Popular bean*

PHOTOS: PAUL DEBOIS; GETTY/JACKY PARKER PHOTOGRAPHY, ALEX MANDERS; TIM SANDALL

Puzzle solutions over page ▶

Crossword

Put down your trowel, pick up a pen and exercise those brain muscles instead…

ACROSS

1 Plant corms of this bloomer, also known as autumn crocus, in late summer (9)

7 Deficiency of this in plants causes yellowing leaves (4)

8 Take softwood cuttings now from shrubs such as __ or smoke bush (7)

9 Natural boundaries that could do with a trim (6)

10 __ bugs are sap-sucking pests (5)

12 Large, round, yellow-fleshed edible roots (6)

15 Example of 17 down (6)

18 Pretty summer bloomer popularly called love-in-a-mist (7)

19 Essential plant carbohydrates created by photosynthesis (6)

22 Burning love is a vivid name for the shrub __ *coccinea* (5)

23 Spiny shrub whose berries are loved by birds (8)

24 Dark, organic material in soil formed by decaying plants (5)

DOWN

1 Feed these long green salad favourites weekly with high-potash tomato fertiliser (9)

2 *Reseda* __ is commonly called wild mignonette (5)

3 A __ fungus infection can be deadly to plants (5)

4 Edible kidney-shaped nut (6)

5 __-your-own-business is a name for *Soleirolia soleirolii* (4)

6 Take cuttings now from this tender leafy perennial known as painted nettle (6)

11 Garland of flowers (3)

12 A __ garden is designed to stimulate sight, sound, touch, feel and smell (7)

13 __ yew is a name for *Taxus baccata* (7)

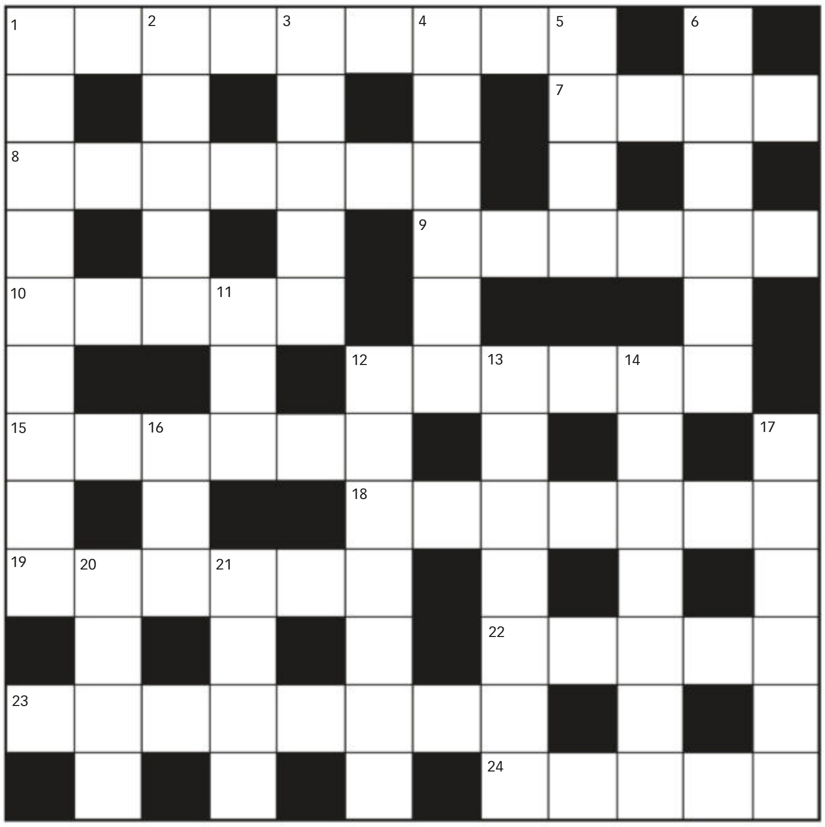
14 A word for a nematode (7)

16 *Rosa canina* is better known as __ rose (3)

17 General term for leafy vegetables eaten raw (6)

20 The gorse genus (4)

21 Latin name meaning white (4)



PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

Step by step There are several possible solutions, including: **LILY** LILT LINT PINT PANT PANS **PADS**

Space invaders green alkanet, couch grass, ground elder, chickweed, groundsel, horsetail

Word wheel Suggested words (not comprehensive): cache, chain, china, cinch, hence, niche, niece

9-letter word: *Echinacea*

Wild beauties *Centaurea nigra* – common knapweed; *Rhinanthus minor* – yellow rattle; *Succisa pratensis* – devil's bit scabious; *Linaria vulgaris* – common toadflax

Secret six thrips, tomato, cherry, carder, blight, runner

CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS

ACROSS 1 Colchicum **7** Iron **8** Cotinus **9** Hedges **10** Mealy **12** Swedes **15** Endive **18** Nigella **19** Sugars **22** Ixora **23** Berberis **24** Humus

DOWN 1 Cucumbers **2** Lutea **3** Honey **4** Cashew **5** Mind **6** Coleus **11** Lei **12** Sensory **13** English **14** Eelworm **16** Dog **17** Salads **20** Ulex **21** Alba

CROSSWORD AND PUZZLES COMPILED BY NICOLA TREVETT

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Issue number 412

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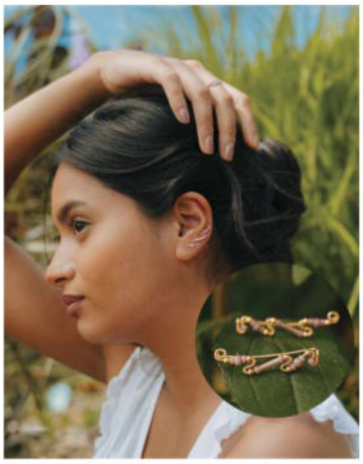

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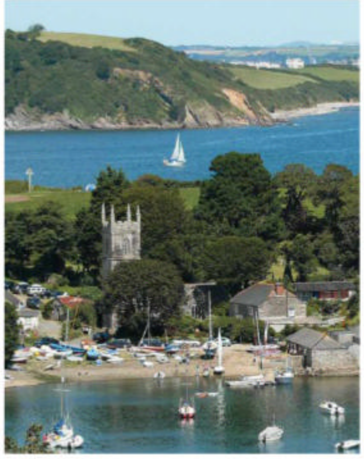

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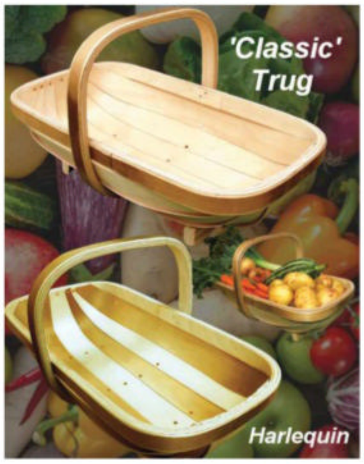

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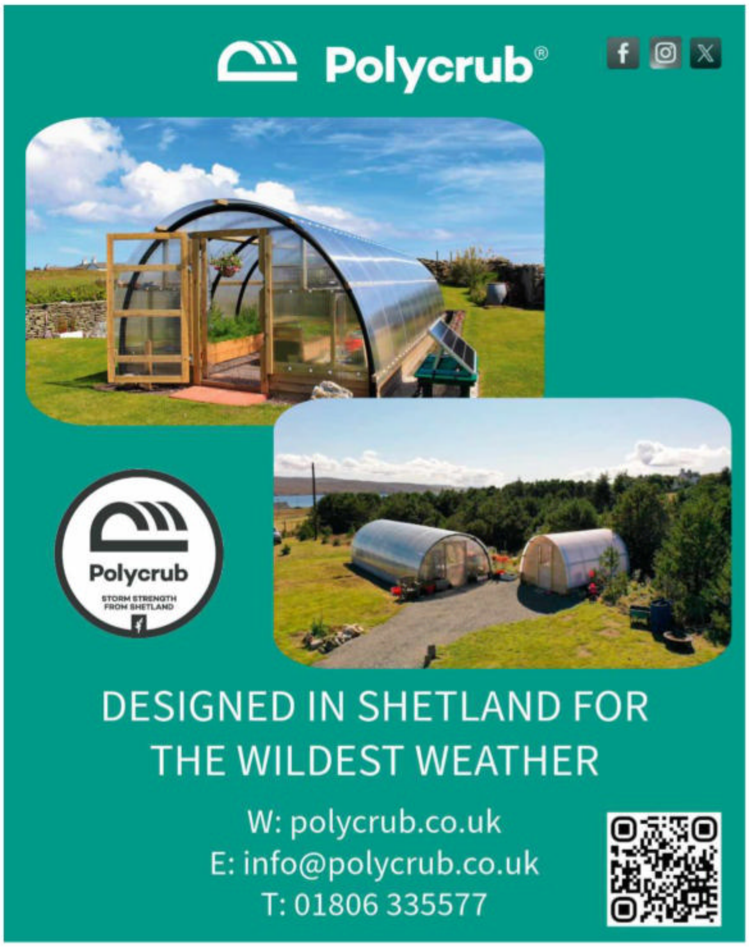

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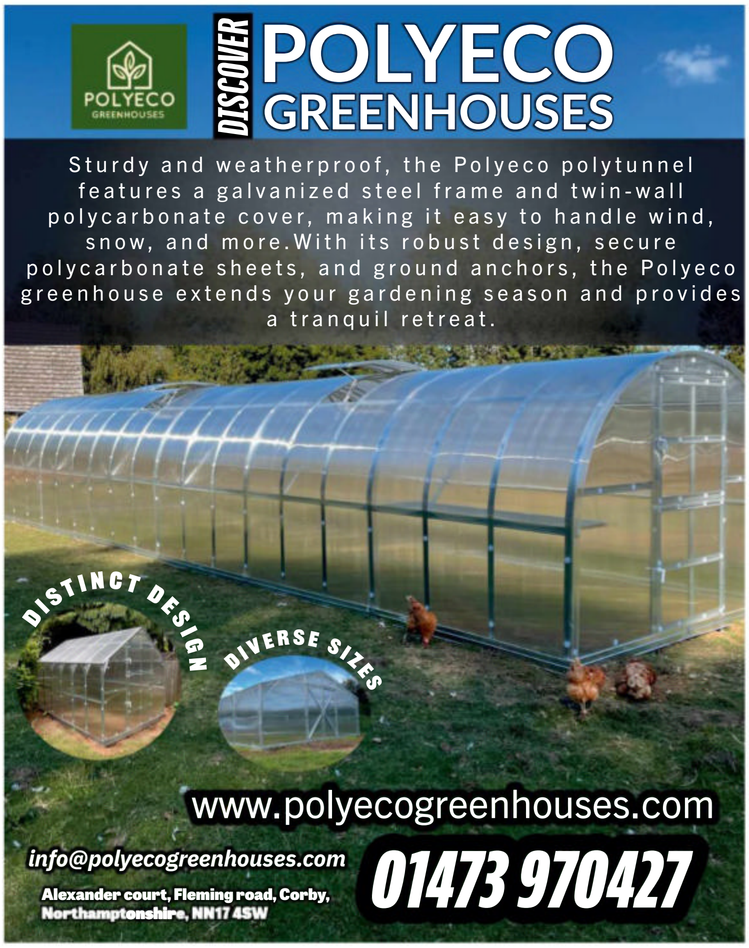

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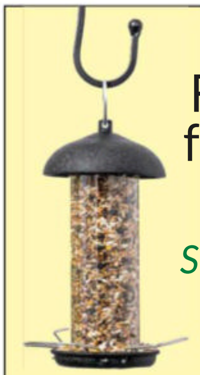

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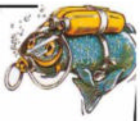

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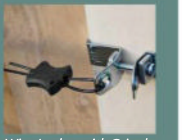

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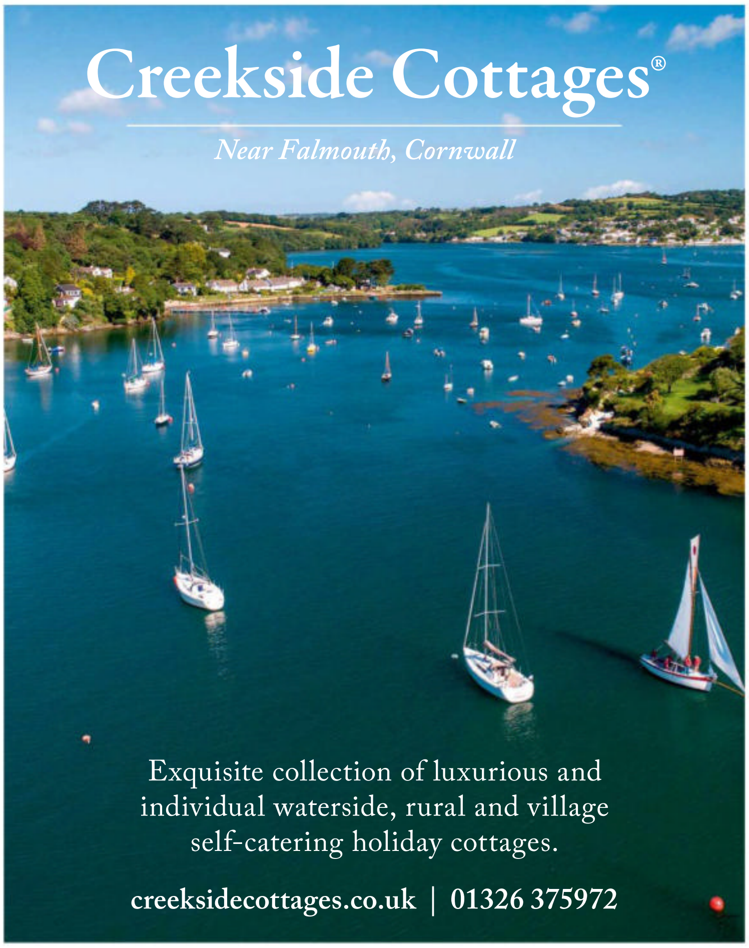

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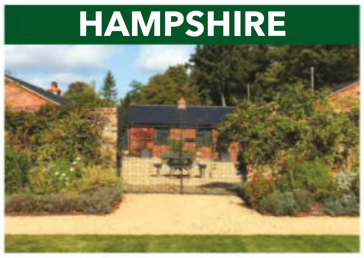

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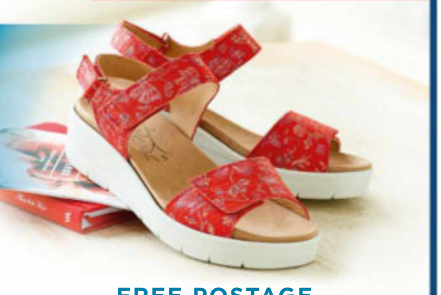

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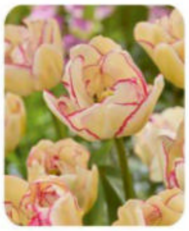

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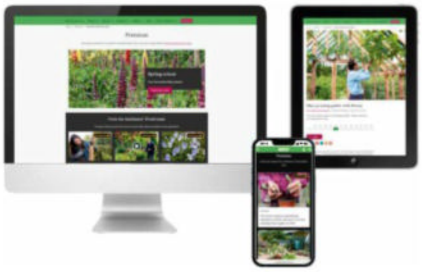

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Tales from Titchmarsh

Despite flattened tulips, disappearing newts and decimated cherry blossom, we should cherish the wildlife in our gardens, says **Alan**

Be careful what you wish for, especially if you consider yourself a wildlife gardener. I mean, who doesn't nowadays? To do otherwise would invite the wrath of anyone with the merest hint of respect for the natural world, not to mention the future of the planet. But there are unseen repercussions when it comes to being kind to our fellow creatures; in particular, the lack of available choice.

You see, you can't just make a list and hope that the Almighty will answer your prayers and send you butterflies like the Large Blue, the Camberwell Beauty, the Swallowtail and the Purple Emperor (all exceedingly rare). 'Fraid not. You see, he has far more Large and Small Whites at his disposal – the kind that love your brassicas – and not enough of the aforementioned choice species to go round. In other words, you can't actually choose which wildlife you want to attract. On the contrary, it chooses you.

Take our wildlife pond, excavated from a vast nettle patch some 15 years ago now. We are at the foot of the South Downs, halfway up a hill, so I knew that otters would be unlikely. My aspirations were much more realistic: newts and dragonflies, damselflies and perhaps the odd kingfisher. Well, I did have newts at the beginning, and dragonflies. But then, from somewhere – probably on the webbed feet of a visiting duck – roach arrived. The roach is a freshwater fish. As a species it is very hungry. Thinking it was just another form of wildlife to gleefully add to my list, I bought some fish food. Whenever I sprinkle it on the water, the surface turns into something reminiscent of that scene in the James Bond movie where the baddie is eaten by piranhas. The once limpid pool becomes a foaming cauldron for fully 30 seconds before all the food disappears. The dragonflies are now just occasional passers-by and the newts – like the dragonfly larvae – have probably fallen prey to the voracious fish.

> “I love the wildlife that inhabits my garden, even the cock pheasant that follows me around like a dog in the hope of a handful of corn”

The compensation is that we do now attract a heron and, as I have never had a yen for expensive koi carp, I am happy to watch him wading and spearing. He even stands in the little boat I keep moored by a plank jetty. To be honest, he uses it more than I do. And yet the fish population does not seem to have decreased due to his depredations.

The kingfisher? I saw him once. I have even arranged for the horizontal branches of a self-seeded alder to remain as a perch to offer him a better view of his quarry in the depths. I await his return, along with the swallows and house martins that swoop across the surface of the water to drink in summer. I love them.

One of the most spectacular moments in the year is the unfurling of the cherry blossom. While I cannot claim that the view in my garden in any way equates with that of the Japanese *sakura* season, my small but now 20-year old plantation of the pure-white 'Shirotae' cherry generally gives rise to gasps in early April. This year we went away for the weekend just before it was due to open. We returned and excitedly walked around the back of our barn to take in the anticipated view. It was pathetic. The welter of buds had been decimated by wood pigeons. Only those flowers at the very tips of the branches, unable to bear the weight of these portly peristeronic gluttons, were intact. Heartbreaking.

Then there are the moorhens that regularly bring off their young among the sedges at the edge of the pond. I read that they are great for controlling slugs. Along with the mallard, which arrive in spring and stay for the mating season before pushing off, they have decided that the transparent spherical water feature round the corner from the pond is a convenient washbasin. They go there to ablute. In doing so, they wade across my twin greenhouse borders planted up with daffodils and tulips. Small hazel hurdles are erected to deter them, but they are not totally efficient. For every three tulips that make it into flower, one is flattened in its prime.

I love the wildlife that inhabits my garden, even the cock pheasant that follows me around like a dog in the hope of a handful of corn. Serves me right for encouraging him. Perhaps I should get a budgie instead.

Alan.

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